

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 21 November 2012
Transcript: Agenda Item 4 – Questions to the Mayor**

3365/2012 - Police Budget

Caroline Pidgeon

How will you use your new budget flexibilities to protect the police budget?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. This really goes to the question that Len [Duvall AM] was asking in his intervention earlier in the meeting and it is about the police budget. What we are going to do to make sure we protect front line policing in London which Len rightly says is something of huge interest to everybody in this city, unlike if I may say some of the debates we have heard just now.

What we need to do is make sure that we keep police numbers high - at or around 32,000 - as I have repeatedly said. I will be discussing with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Deputy Mayor's Team, Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime], and with the Commissioner about ways in which we can ensure public access to policing and indeed improve access to policing.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. The MOPAC budget submission which we all received late last night for the next three years has at the top of its savings list £91 million relating to police property. What does this actually mean for police front counters?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we are doing is, as I think Londoners would expect, a thorough review of hundreds of buildings that are the property of the MOPAC here in this city. Not all of them are as efficient as we would like. There is scope for savings and for using them better. What I have said, and I want to stress this, is that no police front counter will be closed unless we can provide the people with equivalent or superior access to the police. That is the principle that I have asked the police and MOPAC to work on.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You are looking at closing nearly half of all front counters in London but victims want to report serious crimes at local police stations. One in four rape offences are reported at front counters every year; that is one in four. Do you really think that it is acceptable for victims to face reporting serious crimes at perhaps these new contact points of yours such as a pop-up store in the coffee shop in Asda?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think what people will want is accessibility, Caroline. They will want to feel the police are there for them and they will want to see police out there in the streets. You speak in derogatory terms about pop-up police counters in supermarkets or wherever. I myself think that's an avenue we could well explore. However, it is crucial that there is 24 hour cover and that is something we are going to have to ensure in every single borough of London. People have got to be able to go to the police station in their borough 24 hours a day.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): People are not going to want to report serious crimes, I think, in supermarkets. Given the strength of feeling from Londoners against some of these proposals - we have seen many petitions here and the volume of emails - will you look again at your police budget to keep front counters open?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will make sure that we use the police budget, and remember that we secured extra funds. I took note of the Assembly's motion of 14 November 2012. I saw what you had to say about trying to secure more funds. I understand what you would like me to do on this. We will do our level best in difficult financial circumstances to get more funding from the Government. However, I have to tell you, with police forces around the country facing serious cuts, which we have very largely managed to protect ourselves from here in London, it is only right that we should use the resources we have to get police out there on the front line where the public want to see them. I really think people will listen to your cynicism about access counters will some alarm. I think the public would be quite grateful for an innovative approach that makes the police more available, more accessible and does not seclude them from the public in Victorian buildings to which they very infrequently actually genuinely have access. Let us look at what we can do to improve access.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Mr Mayor, you have reiterated this morning the answer you gave to my question last month, saying that your commitment is that no front counter will close unless an equivalent or better facility for public access has been identified. Yet previously you said that no front counter will be closed down before an alternative or improved replacement has been opened. There is a big difference between identifying an opportunity and opening one. Does this not mean that effectively you are backtracking on your previous promise and we could see front counters closing before new alternatives are even open?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Clearly we will want to make sure that there is no closure before the equivalent provision is capable of being used, is up and running.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): So you are absolutely guaranteeing that? Last month you changed your wording to 'identified'.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see and understand the point you are making and it is a legitimate point, Caroline. My understanding is that there will be direct equivalence and there will be no loss of cover. There will be no interim gap in cover.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): So you are guaranteeing that there will be absolutely no time gap between a front counter closing and new contact point opening?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am, yes.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Thank you very much.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Picking up on that point, does a direct equivalence include the same number of hours? Where you have an alternative, would it be open the same number of hours as the previous one that has been closed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The most important thing is that the level of access, the availability and accessibility of the police should be equivalent or indeed better.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I am not sure I have a great deal of confidence in that. I will ask the question again. If a front counter is closed will an alternative have the same number of hours as the one that has been closed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well yes it will, because otherwise it would not be equivalent.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you for that. Both your Deputy and yourself in September said to me when I asked about police front counters, you said in a direct answer to me, you said that you would publish plans for boroughs and invite the public to comment on them. Is that still the intention?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is, as far as I know, Joanne. The plans will basically go out for consultation at the end of the year and in January 2013 along with the Draft Budget Consultation Document.

Joanne McCartney (AM): OK, because I have a letter here that one of our Assembly Members has received for a borough, setting out what is proposed in a particular borough but has the line in it, "There is no requirement for a statutory consultation process with the community at large, but it is important that I canvas the issues and concerns of our stakeholders," which does not give me confidence that the Metropolitan Police Service understand that there is going to be a full public consultation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I do not know quite why it has been phrased in that way but the Metropolitan Police Service is absolutely determined that there should be a full public consultation on these proposals when they come forward and so am I.

Joanne McCartney (AM): At the moment, Assembly Members, Members of Parliament (MPs) and some councillors are being briefed on what is happening or is proposed in their boroughs. Would it surprise you that some Assembly Members have received no contact at all, some have received consultation that amounts to about one or two lines in an email, and some have received full briefing? Given that you are in charge of the police estate do you think that is good enough?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, Joanne, as yet there are no proposals, you have to understand that –

Joanne McCartney (AM): Sorry, at the moment there is a six week dialogue supposedly with stakeholders. We are stakeholders, some have had very good briefing, some have had none at all, and some have had an email which has one or two lines in it. It appears to be very inconsistent. It appears to me that if this is going to be a good and robust process that there has to be conformity and really good dialogue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course and when the proposals are made we will make sure there is uniformity of dialogue and everybody is fully brought into the discussions.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Can I ask then, are you aware whether equality impact assessments have been or will be undertaken to any of the suggested proposals?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am absolutely confident that the police will want to study all the impacts of the proposals when they come forward on all communities in London and all equalities matters will be taken into consideration; of course.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I understand that the Metropolitan Police Service has a central criterion that they are going to be using when deciding about public access. However, as Mayor and knowing London, would you agree that there are some areas of London that may be an exception to the standard rule where the needs are perhaps greater and therefore more resources should perhaps be kept.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand completely the point that you are making and this is the kind of point, with great respect Joanne, that Assembly Members will be able to make at great length, with great vehemence, and with great power when the proposals come before you. I would urge you just to have a little bit of patience there.

Joanne McCartney (AM): See I have been briefed by one of my boroughs but not the other; I am having that tomorrow. I was surprised to hear, for example, that Tottenham police station is not going to be a 24 hour one, or the central Metropolitan Police Service do not believe it, but it seems to me that Tottenham, given what has happened in recent times there, deserves to have a 24 hour police station. Would you agree with me that some boroughs for example may require more than one 24 hour police station?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is obviously a very good point but you would forgive me if I do not go into the detail of proposals which have not yet even been formulated formally. If and when there is a proposal of the kind that you describe, that would be the moment to discuss it. So far I am not aware of any such proposal.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Well I have been made aware that the Metropolitan Police Service, centrally, believes that that is the case. Can I perhaps finish by asking, who is actually in charge of this process? We have the Metropolitan Police Service briefing local stakeholders on front counters and I understand you then have to sign them off. However, the announcement that Len Duvall referred to earlier - the one that happened after our deadline of 9.30am on Monday morning - was the Metropolitan Police Service holding a press briefing it appears to attempt to set out reductions in numbers at senior ranks and across the board. Were you sighted on that press briefing before it happened?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, I am aware of the budget--

Joanne McCartney (AM): Were you sighted before it happened?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course I am aware of the budget process but I want to reiterate that there is no final decision, indeed there are no proposals until the draft budget is put before Members of the Assembly by MOPAC in January. So all this is a little bit premature.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Can I ask, the Metropolitan Police Service had a press conference. Did they let you or MOPAC know that they were holding the press conference to set out what their plans were for reductions in police numbers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, of course --

Joanne McCartney (AM): Did you know about it or not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- they work with Stephen Greenhalgh on the timing of their budgetary process that is going on. I must reiterate the central point that whatever announcements you think may have been made this week there is no budget announcement until it is agreed, and until it is revealed and put before you in January.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Then why did you go on television and give an interview saying that you actually supported it, and thought it was the right way, if you have not yet examined it and signed it off through the budget process?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I have said, and what I have said to you this morning, is that our priorities are to get more officers out on the frontline if we possibly can, to keep numbers at or around 32,000 as I have continuously said and, just to repeat the point I have made, to ensure that we make the best possible use of the police estate. That is what Londoners would want us to do.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I first heard about this on Monday. The officer who contacted me told me she had taken a week to find my email, which does not say much for the detective skills of the Metropolitan Police Service as I had actually given them those details to both borough commanders when I was first elected. I was told they had to come in by Thursday this week which does not really give much time.

On 19 September in answer to Mayor's Questions you told me there were no plans to close West Hampstead. On 17 October you said the same about Hampstead and the same about Whetstone, Golders Green and Barnet. Then two weeks later, low and behold, what is going to happen? They are going to close. Last night I attended a meeting with the police, councillors and Safer Neighbourhood panel people in Camden. The superintendent, despite what you have just said Mayor, told us in no uncertain terms that this policy was a given, it was non-negotiable, and all we could be consulted about was where these desks were going to go.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Look, what you are getting --

Andrew Dismore (AM): Let me finish the point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, go on.

Andrew Dismore (AM): The replacement for Hampstead police station is going to be a four hour a week desk in Costa Coffee, which will no doubt come as news to Costa Coffee in Highgate because they have not actually been asked if they are prepared to host it. We were told that the alternative for Golders Green would be, the Safer Neighbourhood place would be open on Fridays and Saturdays for the particular convenience of the Jewish community, which will no doubt be very interesting bearing in mind what Jewish people tend to do on Fridays and Saturdays, the least of which would probably be contacting the police. That is something of an embarrassment and I think even an insult to them.

As far as the 24/7 stations are concerned, Holborn is going to be in the very far south of Camden, inaccessible by public transport to most of the rest of the borough. In Barnet it will be in Colindale at the very far west of the borough and inaccessible to most people on the east, rather than looking at sensible

locations. Frankly, Mr Mayor, when the police were laying this out to us last night they were embarrassed by what they had to say. They got a really hard time from the community there who said this was not going to work.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well that's fine –

Andrew Dismore (AM): Is it fair to put the police in this position, fronting up your policies of cuts, rather than taking the rap yourself, which is what you keep trying to avoid by ducking what is going on, you and Mr Greenhalgh between you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are entitled to bust a blood vessel if you want but what I would say to you is what I have said to everybody else this morning, which is that there are no proposals that have been agreed. All the suggestions that you are making are not yet set in stone. I would also say to you, as I think I said last time we discussed this, that clearly there are ways of making better use of the police estate and I do not think you should fetishise bricks and mortar when there might be creative solutions that can get the public more access or equivalent access to the police. I understand that, as I said before, people will want to criticise and they will want to make what political capital they can and quite rightly too; we are all politicians. However, in the end it is my job to make sure that we have better policing in this city and we continue to bring crime down. Crime is coming down, it has come down 2.5% in the last year alone --

Andrew Dismore (AM): Mayor, the police are not politicians and you are putting them in a position --

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Assembly Member Dismore will you let the Mayor finish?

Andrew Dismore (AM): Well he is going on --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be just grateful to be allowed to finish this point. The acid test of a good crime and policing policy in London is not whether we make cultural landmarks out of this or that building, whatever public service it has offered over a long period of time, but whether we continue to deliver better results, better services for our people; that is what we are paid to do. My job is to make sure that we get the funding for the police to get them out onto the streets and to come up with creative solutions for the police estate that enable the public to have access to them and that generate public confidence. I am sure you would agree with that.

Andrew Dismore (AM): The point about it is quite simple, Mayor. We are politicians, the police are not. You are putting them in the political position you should be occupying in terms of trying to sell this policy to the people. The police were embarrassed last night and as far as the superintendent last night was concerned it was absolutely clear that this is a fixed policy that he has been told to implement with the people of Camden. No matter what you say, the police believe it to be a fixed policy so I suggest you have a word with the Commissioner and/or the officers further down the food chain who have been given the job of selling this pup and explain to them that it is not a fixed policy after all, because they all think it is.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand the objections you are making. As and when there is an agreed proposal and we put forward finally the proposals we have for changes in the police estate, or whatever it happens to be, of course I will front that up, take all the flak, and all the abuse that you wish to direct at me. That is only right. I must respectfully repeat the point with which I began this morning that

there is as yet no settled proposal on this matter and you will just have to hold your horses and wait until January.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, when you were in Croydon yesterday did you take the time to visit South Norwood police station where there has been a firm and settled proposal to close that station which was published in September?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did not get to that police station but what I can tell you is that in Croydon, as in the rest of London, crime has been coming down. I am concerned that we should keep police cover high in Croydon and that is the objective of what we are doing.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): If you had visited that police station, Mr Mayor, you would have noticed it is not a Victorian station, it is a modern, large building in a very good location.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nothing wrong with Victorian stations by the way.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Did you find anybody when you were in Croydon who felt that what you were doing in closing South Norwood police station was improving their access to the police or being innovative? Did you find anybody who actually supported that decision?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well to be honest, Val, I found a lot of people who were very encouraged by some of the progress that has been made in the London Road area in West Croydon, which is where I was, who were interested in the funds that we have been able to direct to that part of Croydon to make it a more attractive place to live in, to work in and to shop. One of the things that I made absolutely clear when I was there was that that funding should be flexible and where it might be necessary to use some of it to pay perhaps for extra Safer Neighbourhood constables or whatever, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), then that might be possible.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You did not find anybody who supported the decision to close the police station?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There was plenty of support for the policies we were pursuing.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): But you did not find anybody who supported the policy of closing the police station did you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I did not ask them that question, Val.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You did not ask them the question. It would have been a good opportunity.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Indeed nobody, I have to tell you, it may surprise you to know that nobody brought it up with me.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Are you aware in fact that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Perhaps you should have been there, you could have heckled me. Why were you not there?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): If I had known you were going to my local police station, which is South Norwood --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You were notified.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I would have been delighted to have joined you there Mr Mayor to show you round this large and modern building --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You could have had a placard.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): -- which gives the public access to the police. Are you aware in fact that some serious crimes in Croydon - wounding, grievously bodily harm (GBH), harassment, violence, robbery - are actually rising in Croydon?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am certainly aware of that. I think over the last 18 months, perhaps two years, there have been aspects of crime that have been of concern.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Of concern, absolutely. Will you therefore --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They have been tackled very robustly. I think the police leadership in Croydon is excellent and they are making a real difference to the problem.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Will you therefore reconsider your decision to close South Norwood police station --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just want --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): -- and actually have a proper consultation locally on it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): At the risk of belabouring this point, Val, I accept your alarm about this proposal, you are right to raise it --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): It is a modern building, Boris. It is not --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- but this is a pupated proposal. There is at the moment no settled scheme for the reconfiguration of the police estate in London. As and when there is I am sure that we will be having a robust series of exchanges about it and I look forward to that time.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I attended a meeting a few weeks back of the local community concerning the future of Hampstead police station and with only the exception of the Liberal Democrat councillor who appeared to be reading from a script, the general consensus of that meeting was that Hampstead police station was not fit for purpose and that the local community welcomed the alternative uses for it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not what Dismore just said.

Andrew Boff (AM): Well one of the questions that I would ask you, Mr Mayor, is if you could forward the details of the Cabinet Member for Community Safety at Camden to Mr Dismore because he has obviously not been talking to him --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you saying that Mr Dismore is just bandwagoning.

Andrew Boff (AM): -- because then he could reflected the true community's concerns.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you saying that the Labour Party is now, finding themselves in opposition, shamelessly bandwagoning and shroud waving and causing a fuss?

Andrew Boff (AM): I would not dream of accusing them of doing that. They seem to be doing that themselves though.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Assembly Member Dismore, I will give you the right of reply. Can you just be quiet a moment?

Andrew Boff (AM): One of the things the community did want an assurance of is that, for any future Hampstead police station site, that the re-provision of access to police services should be considered as a package - if it results in a disposal - with that disposal. Is that an undertaking that you can give?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just say this: on all these questions - and we are going to do the Fire Brigade in a minute and health services later on - you have my absolute assurance that I will fight for improved services for London; that is what I want. Safer streets, better hospitals, better healthcare and ever diminishing deaths from fire. By the way incidents of fire have come down 18% since I was elected and I think fire callouts have gone down 25% since I was elected. That is what we want to achieve. Crime is down more than around 12%. We want to keep those key indicators going in the right direction; that is my job.

What I will also do, where it is necessary, is defend common sense. I am afraid I will sometimes have to say to you, individual local Members of the Assembly who are doing your job to stick up for local provision as you see it, I will have to say to you sometimes that it looks to me as though change might be a good idea.

Val, of course you can have brilliant buildings that are Victorian and useful buildings that are modern. The issue is where they are and how useful they are to the public. That is the principle we must work on.

Andrew Boff (AM): I take your assurances in increasing public access. One of the things that matters in Camden along with public access is response times. Can you be sure, Mr Mayor, that in any re-provision of police services in Camden that we ensure that the response times are kept the same or, if not, improved?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Response times is the key indicator in the fire service as well. We will be looking very hard at response times and making sure that the public have that confidence that the police are going to get there in time. One of the difficult arguments in all this is that the buildings themselves - a point people often make about hospitals - help to engender that feeling of confidence and trust in the service. I actually do not think that is a fatuous point, I think we need to factor that in.

Andrew Boff (AM): One of the other things I would like you to seriously consider Mr Mayor when reviewing Hampstead police station is the possible use of that site for the Abacus free school, which would be a primary school for residents in the area rather than the other schools in the area which just seem to import children from further afield. There is very little provision for a primary school in the area where children can walk to school. If you could seriously consider the application from Abacus I would be very grateful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is in Hampstead?

Andrew Boff (AM): In Hampstead.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly look at that and I wonder whether Andrew [Dismore] might want to take that up himself since he is the Member for that neighbourhood.

Andrew Boff (AM): I will forward the details to him.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It might get him some votes from the parents.

Andrew Boff (AM): You never know. Thank you very much.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Can I just make a note here and say if Members are going to call other Members names, then that Member has a right to get up and make a point of personal explanation. It can then become a really dreary morning with just Members getting up and speaking out of turn in some instances. So can I just remind you that if we are here to get on with our work that we focus on the Mayor? Assembly Member Dismore, you have been named; do you want to make a point of personal –

Andrew Dismore (AM): Point of order Chair. At the meeting last night the Cabinet Member for Community Safety in Camden was there as were a large number of people from Hampstead. I had an email today from the chair of the Safer Neighbourhood panel in Hampstead to the police officer who was conducting the enquiry and what he has written is this:

“Hi, thank you for your presentation this evening. It should be noted that I disagree with the concept you outlined in your presentation. As however you have asked for sites to be proposed for Camden police contact points here they are: 1) Hampstead contact point has to be in Hampstead police station.”

I think it is pretty clear what the community think and that was the overwhelming view expressed at the meeting last night.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well there you go.

Steve O’Connell (AM): Referring to your earlier comments, is that the same if I say something very nice about someone on the other side? So, picking up on the earlier comments of Valerie [Shawcross], I know she feels very passionate about Croydon and although I know our Conservative candidate will win next Thursday, I know Valerie would have made a fantastic MP in Croydon North.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Can I have a question from you Steve O'Connell?

Steve O'Connell (AM): I was not going to mention it but thank you very much for your visit to London Road and the businesses there yesterday. I think my colleague across the way misses the point slightly because your visit yesterday was to seek reassurance and see improvements on London Road. However, the point around access, would you not agree that the shopkeepers and residents in London Road, particularly around your investment, would like to have a presence along London Road?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is right.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Not a police station but an accessibility so that they can go and report crime along that particular area. That is the question that they were asking you and not the question about South Norwood.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely. That was the point that I made to shopkeepers and to residents that, of the £9 million that we are putting into the West Croydon area, I think about £3 million is going for urban rail improvements around West Croydon station and then considerable sums to support local business down London Road. By the way, they raised parking, Steve a lot - a matter for the council who might want to talk about parking in London Road - they raised businesses rates, but crime actually they did not raise. Nevertheless you cannot be complacent and if they have issues I think it might be possible to use some of that funding to equip them with extra Safer Neighbourhood PCSOs or constables. We should certainly look at that.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Also on the point about access, our public do deserve good access. Many of the stations and the front counters at the moment are under-used, I think you would agree with that. If we work this properly we will actually see an increase in the number of places --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes and let us have less of the negativity.

Steve O'Connell (AM): -- where they can have the access at certain contact points in the area. My last point really about those good residents of London Road and South Norwood also, is they deserve to see extra police on the streets. Would you not agree that these are proposals that need to be consulted upon quite thoroughly and fully in the New Year, but if the end result is that those good people in South Norwood, London Road and elsewhere in Croydon and elsewhere in London see extra constables on the streets, that would be a good thing for London. Would you not agree with that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It absolutely would and that is why the priority has got to be getting more police out there. I congratulate you Steve, once again, on all the good work you do for Croydon and representing the people. We will work together with the council to continue to bring crime down in that neighbourhood.

Roger Evans (AM): I would like to take this opportunity Boris to commend the Acting Borough Commander at Redbridge who ran a stakeholder consultation session with us last week about the future of public access in Redbridge. I know members of the council were there really from all sides who were concerned about the robustness of some of the public access statistics which the exercise is based on. Could

you just make sure that the statistics that are used to inform this process are as solid as they can be, because we do not want to undermine --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, what was the worry about the statistics?

Roger Evans (AM): I think the problem was that they were based on a couple of years ago, they were not particularly recent and the sample sizes were considered to be a little bit on the small side.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is very helpful. I will make sure that MOPAC get onto that straightaway.

Roger Evans (AM): Yes. Another possible concern that we have is what is happening across borders. At the moment the process is rightly concentrating on a particular borough but the movement of facilities across the border of the borough may affect the police in that borough because of course criminals and members of the public do not recognise borough boundaries. When the final package is put together for public consultation will there be an opportunity to take that into account?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, and we will make sure that we take a completely strategic view, a cross-London view of provision, in order to reduce crime overall, yes.

Roger Evans (AM): Just finally, another piece of reassurance that we need, because I think Caroline [Pidgeon] raised quite a good point earlier on, that the new access facilities may attract more people to come and use them because they are in places that the public frequent more often. However, if we do not have a facility for people who are victims of serious crimes to be able to report them with some confidentiality they might be discouraged. Could we make sure that is --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes I understand that point completely. That is why one of the things I have said straight out to you this morning is that every borough must have a 24 hour police station where the public can go in confidence and report serious crime; that is absolutely essential.

Richard Tracey (AM): The core fact is that the public want more constables on the street, so they are looking forward to the 2,000 extra police officers that you pledged in the election.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which are being delivered by Bernard Hogan-Howe.

Richard Tracey (AM): Indeed. Is it not correct that the statistics show that most people who want to contact the police do it either by phone or by email, and the statistics show there is a fairly small number going to front counters? Rather than having police officers behind the front counters can I ask you to look at what the Wandsworth Council leadership are talking to their excellent Borough Commander about, which is to have volunteers behind front counters to make sure that the police officers are on the streets?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is one of the things that I am sure is going to be discussed exhaustively when the proposals come forward. I think we want to be careful about how we approach it and the language we use. Whether we are looking for people to come in off the street and volunteer to do a sensitive task like that, I am not quite sure. What we want to do is use our resources effectively and get police out there as much as we possibly can. The argument about counters not being used is well taken, but

there will always be a minimal need for somewhere people can go in confidence and expect to find a police officer; that is absolutely essential. I have said this to the police and to MOPAC. We have to have an adequate supply of them around London. That does not mean, however, that you cannot be creative and use access counters and create access counters where the public will normally see them in the course of their day.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Thanks for that. I am just going to move the question about the Metropolitan Police Service budgets cuts in the name of Joanne McCartney to the next question. That is question 3794.

Joanne McCartney (AM): It has been answered, thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I believe all of the questions have been answered after all that.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Well you would say that wouldn't you. Let me then stay with the crime theme and bring up a question in the name of Assembly Member Cleverly and that is question number 3768, predictive crime mapping.

3768/2012 - Predictive crime mapping

James Cleverly

Over the past seven years, predictive crime mapping software is believed to have contributed to a 30% reduction in crime in Memphis, Tennessee. Will you consider piloting a similar scheme in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, James, for that question which is an interesting one resulting from what you have seen going on in Memphis, Tennessee, where actually they used predictive crime mapping to deal with a spike in crime that they were experiencing, whereas we have been seeing steady reductions in crime. Kit [Malthouse, former Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] and I, right at the beginning of the Mayoralty in 2008, put in crime mapping in London; we have crime mapping. Whether you can move to predictive crime mapping is now the subject of an active study by the Metropolitan Police Service and we will make sure we keep you plugged in about how that is going.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you for that, Mr Mayor. I recognise that the impact of reactive crime mapping has been positive. It has allowed people to get a better idea of where crime does indeed happen in their local areas which can have both a reassuring effect but also enables residents who are perhaps unaware of crime types in the local area to be proactive about it.

I was particularly drawn not just to Tennessee but to the quotes of the Police Chief of Los Angeles, who said, "I'm not going to get more money, I'm not going to get more cops. I have to be better at using what I have and that's what predictive policing is all about." I think goes very much to the heart of what we have just been discussing.

I think traditionally colleagues on the other side of the Chamber have regarded the solution to any and every problem as being to throw more resources at it. However, I do think we have now got to the time - and

perhaps we should always have done this even in times of plenty - to focus less on the resources going in and more on the outputs and outcomes generated by those resources.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We had a very interesting discussion you and I the other night, if I remember, about the possibilities of using new social media to engage the public in fighting crime, and give people more information about what is going on in their neighbourhood. Not to scarify or alarm, but to help people identify problems. That may be something we could develop or it may not. What I certainly think we should not do is turn our backs on new technology of all kinds. If predictive crime mapping can help us to work out where the hotspots are going to be and therefore not waste resources, then that is obviously a sound investment.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you Mr Mayor. I think one of the reasons why I am very passionate about this is that it goes very much with the grain of well-established and traditional police practices. If you ask any police officer involved in burglary they will tell you that when one burglary has happened you often find a little cluster of burglaries around the same area. They do this instinctively, so I think this is something that could very much go with the grain of what police really do. We already have used predictive modelling very successfully in the Fire Brigade in terms of reallocation of assets. Indeed the London Ambulance Service use predictive mapping to ensure that their ambulance assets are where the calls are mostly likely to be in the future. They are doing a lot of their demand management by getting their assets in the right places.

I value your support on this as an issue and ask that, if there is an opportunity for us to lobby for us to extend this trial with support from the Home Office, if possible that we make every effort to do so.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good. I will make sure that we keep you plugged in James, thank you very much.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you.

3420/2012 - Work experience pilot

Jenny Jones

Are you confident that young people will benefit from your mandatory work experience pilot?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am confident that young people will benefit from the scheme we are running. I will tell you why. I think I can see where you are coming from. You are worried about kind of forced labour and dragooning people into work. The vicious circle is that the key thing a young person on benefits wants to get is the work experience that will enable them to get a job. They are continuously told they cannot get a job until they have work experience and they cannot have any work experience until they get a job. You can get round that vicious circle, you can help them with this scheme. Let's give it a go. It will go live on Monday, 26 November 2012 and it will support about 6,000 young people and I think we should try it.

Jenny Jones (AM): I have no problem with the idea of giving work experience. I think that is an excellent idea and we have done it ourselves in the past. However, you have made it mandatory and dropped any sort of quality control so you will have absolutely no idea if the work is valuable or how many young people

actually get jobs afterwards. You did promise that you would have quality control but you have now dropped it. I am sure you have heard from young people --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, that is not true.

Jenny Jones (AM): -- for example, somebody who was at a company had a first class degree and said, "I was given a fancy title but all it meant was running round with a mop clearing up spilt jam, alcohol and urine." Somebody else said --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just say something on that?

Jenny Jones (AM): Can I just finish because I think it is important you hear what people have said about it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Go on.

Jenny Jones (AM): A black woman who was doing mandatory voluntary work at the British Heart Foundation said, "It's absolutely slave labour. It's the 21st century but they have put me back in slavery." These are people who have experienced mandatory work experience of the sort that you are implementing. I am just very concerned that you now have taken out all quality control and we will not know whether or not it is valuable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well that is not true.

Jenny Jones (AM): You have taken out quality control.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The providers will have to demonstrate --

Jenny Jones (AM): You told me you did. You told me you took out --

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Can we have an answer from the Mayor?

Jenny Jones (AM): No but I just want to say what he told me last time, which was that all quality controls, the London Development Agency (LDA) --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I give you my answer? The providers will have to demonstrate both to the Greater London Authority (GLA) and to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that the placements meet the criteria we have set down which include 30 hours of placement per week for 30 weeks and in a role that provides community benefit. They will have to make that clear to us. They are paid by results so the contract works in the sense that they will be paid much less if the beneficiaries of the scheme do not actually go on to work. They will be rewarded if the participants do succeed in finding jobs.

Jenny Jones (AM): Where are those criteria from?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just want to pick up one thought of yours because I think we are guilty --

Jenny Jones (AM): Please, Mr Mayor, you know very well I have quite limited time

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- of some quite loose thinking. Well I just want to --

Jenny Jones (AM): -- and you tend to go off on one of your little forays into your imagination. Are you saying to me that you will apply the LDA's quality management, quality assessment of the scheme? That is all I am asking for. You did promise it once and you went back on it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They are paid by results and in that sense they have a strong motive to perform properly and they have to demonstrate to us and the DWP that what they are doing is of community benefit. If they are not doing that and these schemes are no good we will get rid of them. If I can I want to just tease out one of your objections which was that somebody with a first class degree should find themselves mopping things up.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, no that was not one of my objections. That is not --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just want you to hold that thought, Jenny, and the snobbery --

Jenny Jones (AM): If you --

John Biggs (AM): -- the unbelievable snobbery it entails.

Jenny Jones (AM): I cannot help it if you did not get a first class degree, I am sorry about that. There is no snobbery on my part. Now listen --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): He did not mop up either.

Jenny Jones (AM): How often do you mop up? How often --

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Jenny.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you saying that people who are involved as they are in doing all kinds of jobs across London are somehow engaged in demeaning professions --

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, you know I have limited time; you come out with all these completely extraneous things. If you are going to provide quality assessment on this, I'm very happy; I will keep an eye on it. I would suggest that those companies that actually do not get people into work are not paid at all. You support the living wage, I do not see how you can support a zero wage. It just seems to me a totally illogical philosophical position for you. You should not be paying these companies if they do not get young people into work.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They are paid on a results basis as I have said just now. If they fail to get people into work whilst running this scheme then their payments will be docked. I think actually that most reasonable people will think that it is a good and sensible idea, that while people are on benefits and while they are receiving taxpayers' money --

Jenny Jones (AM): We are not disagreeing on that. I am sorry, Mr Mayor, you are repeating yourself --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- while not in work, it would be a good idea --

Jenny Jones (AM): -- you are repeating yourself. Thank you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- simultaneously to equip them --

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Stop interrupting.

Jenny Jones (AM): He just keeps going.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- with the valuable qualification of work experience because that will enable them to get a full time job.

Jenny Jones (AM): You have repeated yourself many times now.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Thank you. Let us then move on. We have two questions next on the London Fire Service. The first one is in the name of Assembly Member Dismore, question number 3791, London's Fire Service.

3791/2012 - London's Fire Service

Andrew Dismore

Will you confirm that no Borough will see worse actual first appliance attendance times as a result of the budget cuts he is imposing on LFEPA?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Can I just say that he [John Biggs AM] is chuntering again in my ear. I do not know what your view about this is, care in the community, he is at it. Do you mind if he constantly --

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): OK.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What is your ruling, Chair?

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): I will pick that up in a moment. Can you just find the answer to this question?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Andrew, thank you very much. It is absolutely vital that we maintain our target responses times and I have insisted to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) and to the London Fire Commissioner [Roy Dobson] that we do so.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Do you agree that there is a difference between the target response time and an actual response time?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There may be but what I have said is that I want to see our target response times protected.

Andrew Dismore (AM): You see, the reason I ask that is that the fire brigade do quite well. Under your modelling of your cuts, the £50 million funding gap over the next two years, every borough except one will see worse attendance times than they get now. In Richmond, for example, the second appliance will take five seconds short of ten minutes on your modelling to get there. Is that appropriate?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A couple of points. First of all, I do not know what proposals you are talking about -- well I do know the proposals you are talking about but they are not ones that have been settled which is point we could go on and on ad nauseam about. Secondly, what matters to me and I think what should matter to anybody of common sense and goodwill who approaches this, is that you continue to meet your target times for responses. It is those targets times that have enabled us in London to continue to reduce deaths by fire and indeed to continue to reduce fires altogether. As I say the figures are very, very creditable to the LFB. The number of fires is down by 18% over the last four years, the number of incidents is down by 25%. That is a great achievement and we are going to keep it going.

Andrew Dismore (AM): At the risk of waving a document about again, this is a paper going to the LFEPA tomorrow. I am sure you have read it like I have. It has your statistics in there which I just quoted to you. The £50 million cuts option shows that every borough in London except one will see worse actual attendance times than they get now.

Perhaps I can give you a real example. Belsize fire station is down for closure on every one of the different options in the paper. Last Thursday on 15 November, Belsize pump was on standby at a different station covering training which would replicate the effect of that station being closed. On that date there was a fire in a first floor flat two streets from the station. West Hampstead had to cover for Belsize. It took them almost eight minutes to get there. Camden's present attendance time is 4 minutes 41 seconds, so it took nearly double what it would take under the average attendance time in Camden, and certainly if Belsize pump had been there they would have got there in two or three minutes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well it is a good point --

Andrew Dismore (AM): Let me finish the point. Luckily no persons were involved in the fire but arithmetically - and I know you probably did arithmetic at Eton - every minute a fire increases exponentially. Proportionately it grows very, very rapidly. It was lucky nobody was in that flat because if they had been their chances of survival would have been significantly worse as a result of that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Dismore (AM): That is no reflection on West Hampstead who had to cover it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course not, no.

Andrew Dismore (AM): That is a scenario you are going to create through your cuts.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand. Indeed, the proposals as I understand them are ones that, if and when they are approved, they must be approved by LFEPA of which I believe you are a member, are you not?

Andrew Dismore (AM): Of course I am. That is why I have read the paperwork, unlike you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know that you, as a responsible member of LFEPA, will want to make sure that fire cover in London is in no way diminished and that we continue to protect people in this city and that is what I want too. Your point about the fire in Belsize Park is well taken and I am sure that will be fed into consideration.

Andrew Dismore (AM): The whole point about it is that it has not been and it will not be under your proposals.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, as I say, you have ample opportunity within the context of LFEPA, under the consultation process that will get underway, to make that case. Obviously, there will be fire service professionals who will say that cover is very good and it is their job to keep improving it. It is an argument, Andrew, that you are there to make and one that is there to be had.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Like Mr Dismore I have also read the papers that are going to the fire authority tomorrow and one of the important sections which he seems to have skated over - it is in bold so he should have seen it - states,

“The modelling work is not complete and should not be taken as representing final proposals. In particular the sensitivity analysis that officers routinely undertake to test the robustness of particular proposals has not yet been fully completed and may produce further important data.”

Do you think it is a shame that Mr Dismore is being as alarmist as he is on this, despite the fact that this very weighty document clearly states that these are not final proposals?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is the job of Assembly Members to stick up for their communities and to sound the alarm where I think it needs to be sounded. I just repeat this serious point I made just now: where it is necessary to fight for local services, to fight for structures, buildings, police stations, hospitals and so on, yes I will be there on the frontline fighting for them. I will also have to ask Londoners sometimes to exercise their judgement and common sense, to accept that there may be clinicians, fire service professionals or senior police officers who think that the public can be safer and better protected under different arrangements. Sometimes that case will be necessary. I know that Labour Members have had to make that case in the past, which is one of the things you have to do when you are in government. I would just ask for people to be reasonable and exercise common sense.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Mr Dismore also refers extensively to your cuts and your proposals. Of course what is stimulating this whole debate is the pending Government settlement. Has the Government given you any indication that you will be getting more money for the fire service this year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is no such indication.

Gareth Bacon (AM): In which case would you agree that this is a fairly prudent piece of modelling that is going on, preparing for the expectation that there will be less money for the fire service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The key thing, Gareth – and I thank you for all the work that you do – is to make sure that we continue to improve fire cover in London. If you can do that by remodelling in some way then we should. We would be completely wrong not to.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Indeed. Do you know of any fire station has put out a fire in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Again I do not want to fetishise buildings but there is a balance to be struck. It is important on the other side of the ledger that we do not let accountants get such a grip of the system that they do real damage to the fabric of the service. We have to have a balance. That is a point I have made to the LFEPA and to the London Fire Commissioner.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Do you agree with the Commissioner of the fire service that the most important thing is response times to incidents --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely.

Gareth Bacon (AM): -- and therefore accurate deployment of forces around London is what is most important here, rather than the location of the real estate?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What matters to Londoners is that the threat of fire should continue to diminish and that the Fire Brigade should be able to get there fast and deal with the problem effectively. They are doing that. We have seen a stunning performance by LFB. I congratulate LFEPA on the support they have been able to give and that is what we want to continue to do.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Londoners are desperately worried about these fire station closures. Would you be prepared to revise your budget settlement for LFEPA to avoid a worsening of response times?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, what I want to see is no reduction of the target response times and that is the challenge I have given to the LFEPA.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): So you would be prepared to revise your budget settlement if that was not the case?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not see any reason, as far as I am aware I do not think that will be necessary.

3792/2012 - Mayor's cuts – fire stations

Fiona Twycross

Is there now a definitive list of fire stations that it is anticipated will close as part of this year's round of cuts?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is again about fire stations. Fiona, well no, there is no definitive list. I think this is a subject that came up last time and perhaps even the time before that. As Gareth has just read out the key bit of the text, this is all for discussion by the LFEPA and I look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Fiona Twycross (AM): At the last Mayor's Question Time we discussed a list of 17 stations that might or might not have been a preferred option. I accept that the modelling might not be complete but has this preferred option now been replaced by the list of 31 stations in this week's Fire Authority meeting papers as the preferred option?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well this is something that you are discussing within LFEPA. As I understand it there is no final list. As and when there is I am sure we will all be having a discussion about it.

Fiona Twycross (AM): So you as Mayor do not have a view on the fire service for which you are overall –

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I think, in case you have just tuned in and missed the previous discussion which was quite extensive about the fire service and my views about it – am I dreaming, did we have a long conversation about the fire service? I think we did. My view is that you have to maximise fire cover, you have to keep incidents of fire coming down and they have come down substantially over the last four years, indeed over the last ten years. You have to make sure that you have appliances in good order, ready to go and get there within their target time. I think that would be common ground amongst everybody in LFEPA. All that being agreed, you need to look at how you deploy your assets to best effect. The average fire appliance is in use 7% of the time --

Fiona Twycross (AM): Yes, going back to --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- so how can you make that asset more useful to the population?

Fiona Twycross (AM): -- the issue of fire stations though, you will be aware that James Cleverly published a list of fire stations that are safe from closure. In light of the comment about the point that modelling is not complete, what is the status of this list? Obviously other people will have a discussion tomorrow

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The status of this list --

Fiona Twycross (AM): -- but are these stations safe and if so why if the modelling is complete? What reassurance can people in those areas take from the list?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The list is not complete and no proposals are finalised.

Fiona Twycross (AM): So there are no safe fire stations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The reassurance that people can take from me and from LFEPA is that we will not do anything to degrade the fire cover we have in London; quite the reverse. We want to see continuing and improving protection from fire in this city. That is the test, just as the test of our Police Buildings Strategy is the continuing falls in crime.

Fiona Twycross (AM): What is the status of a list of stations that are safe then?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The status of that list is not final, that is the status of that list. Whatever list you may or may not be referring to, it is not final, OK?

Fiona Twycross (AM): There is no list that is final in any sense?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Fiona Twycross (AM): In terms of the safe list that was published, why were the private finance initiative (PFI) stations put on the safe list? Are they regarded as safe and is this a matter of – as you were referring to accountants earlier --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you seriously asking me to comment on Labour's PFI strategy which they have left us with?

Fiona Twycross (AM): No I am asking you why the PFI stations were on the list of safe stations. That is a different question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I can just repeat my answer which is that there is no final list but I really think that any comment about PFI comes pretty ill from Labour who saddled everybody with this blooming policy that we have all had to deal with ever since.

Andrew Dismore (AM)(?): It was started by John Major [former Conservative Prime Minister].

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on, who was in power? How long were they in power for? Am I dreaming? Was there a Labour Government for 13 years? Does anybody remember some people called Gordon Brown [Former Chancellor and Labour Former Prime Minister] and Tony Blair [Former Labour Prime Minister]? Have they just been erased from history in a sort of Stalinist way? They have been expunged from the record book? Maybe it never happened. Maybe it was all a bad dream. Was there a Labour Government?

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Assembly Member Twycross, sorry, there is no way there you are going to get louder than him.

Fiona Twycross (AM): No I appreciate that, OK, thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Can we just hold on a moment, the clock has stopped. The Mayor is taking a drink of water.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Okay, good.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just think we should have some basic historical knowledge here.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There was a Labour Government in power for 13 years.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): -- can you just wait and get the next question from Assembly Member Twycross.

Fiona Twycross (AM): It will be my final question before I hand over to other colleagues. Given that the public attitudes research undertaken for the London Fire Brigade which is in the documents going to LFEPA tomorrow demonstrates a firm view from the public that gold service is needed just in case, what would the Mayor say to Londoners who do not want the fire stations in their areas to close, in advance of the debate?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would humbly and sincerely accept the motivation that Assembly Members will obviously wish to defend every brick of every fire station in their patch and I understand why politicians will want to do that. I will also say that I think the fire service is actuated by the highest possible motives. They want to continue to improve fire cover in London. They think they can do that with the reform they are going to propose. I think we should give them a fair hearing, apply common sense and I think that all your constituents should be reassured that it is our objective, it is the LFEPA's objective and it is my objective to make sure that deaths from fire continue to come down as they have over the last ten years and indeed over the last four years as well.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, good morning. How many fire stations will be closing and fire engines lost to meet the remaining deficit of £50 million over the next two years.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With great respect, Navin, I think I have laboriously tried to answer that question several times already. You have the answer as a member of LFEPA. It is in your hands, you are about to reach a decision on this, and I look forward to hearing from you and what your conclusions are.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, we are --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are a member of LFEPA still?

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, if I can carry on with my question. Very clearly you are either poorly briefed or you are not prepared to say what you should be saying in the public domain. According to the London Fire Brigade, for them to meet this remaining £50 million deficit there is clearly a proposal and indication that 31 fire stations will close. 36 appliances will be lost and indeed, in this report which will be discussed tomorrow at the Authority, there is in fact a list of all 31 fire stations. Given your response to Assembly Member Bacon's question that there is no indication of a better settlement from the Government, my question to you therefore is, what are you doing as the Mayor to get a better deal for Londoners so that we do not end up with massive closures of fire stations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I am doing is making sure that whatever proposals are brought forward by you as LFEPA do nothing to diminish the fire cover in London and, quite the contrary, continue to offer Londoners ever better protection from fire.

Navin Shah (AM): Let me put it to you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To that end I have said that I want to make sure the target times for fire appliances one and two getting to fires are maintained. I am assured by fire service professionals that that will continue to allow us to reduce deaths from fire in London and reduce the incidents of fire. That is what I want to see.

Navin Shah (AM): I will put it to you again because you have not answered the question. Have you actually lobbied the central Government to get a better deal so that the safety of residents of London is not jeopardised by the massive £50 million hole in which we find ourselves?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can take it, Navin, that I am continuously lobbying central Government for a better deal for London. That is indeed why it set up the independent [London] Finance Commission. We are in constant negotiation for funds for the motor of the UK economy. I want to see the Vauxhall Battersea Nine Elms project off the ground, I think we need £300 million there and we need to afford track for West Anglia Main Line. However, what we need to do with the fire service is to listen to the experts and listen to LFEPA, the vast body of wisdom incarnated in you, and make sure that we deliver a service the drives down deaths from fire in London.

Navin Shah (AM): Well, Mr Mayor, you have not answered my direct question. All I can conclude is that you are responsible but you are --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are. My dear fellow, you are sitting there in LFEPA and it is your budget and I will look forward to seeing it.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Now, can we move on?

Navin Shah (AM): No, Chair, I have a final question.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): You can have another question.

Navin Shah (AM): If you will only allow me to ask, thank you. Mr Mayor, you cannot wash your hands of responsibility --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not.

Navin Shah (AM): -- because the buck stops with you. You set the budget of the London Fire Brigade and LFEPA, and it is your Government that is drastically cutting too far and too fast. Are you prepared for LFEPA to have a massive reduction in cutting rather than the massive increase we and Londoners are facing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am certainly prepared to help LFEPA if I think it is necessary but I look forward to hearing your proposals, Navin, for the budget. I look forward to seeing the plans that LFEPA --

Navin Shah (AM): Chair, I am finished.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and I am confident that you have the interests at Londoners at heart and will want to make sure - like Andrew [Dismore] and everybody else on LFEPA - that we have a

system that allows us to continue to reduce deaths from fire in London and continues to improve fire cover. That is the objective.

John Biggs (AM): Well I am pleased to see that you are drinking a non-tax avoiding cup of coffee rather than one made by your mates at Starbucks. I think that epitomises the moral problem we have here, which is that you are the Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do I own Starbucks now? Am I shareholder in Starbucks?

John Biggs (AM): You gave them millions of free publicity didn't you? You are the Mayor who has given guidance which is going to lead to the biggest cuts in fire cover in three generations in this city and yet you wash your hands of it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not washing my hands of it. I am not washing my hands of anything.

John Biggs (AM): I will give you a specific un-hand washing question then, which is about one of my boroughs, Tower Hamlets, where we have the highest rate of fire callouts of any borough in London and yet we face on all of the draft proposals the biggest cut in fire engine provision. Given that we have not yet invented a way for a fire engine to be in two places at once – you may be working on that but I doubt it – that presents a dilemma does it not, in terms of fire cover. Will you join me in urgently reviewing any proposal which will cut fire cover most severely in the places with the highest levels of demand?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. I have joined you in many things before. I joined you in building a cable car across the river and you pledged to vote for me if I did; a promise you shamelessly broke.

John Biggs (AM): Could you answer the question? This is a serious question about life and death and people's anxieties about their safety in their homes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have now I think been answering this point solidly for about half an hour. I am absolutely determined to make sure that fire cover in areas like Tower Hamlets and across London is not eroded one bit. The way to do that is to keep the LFB to their target response times --

John Biggs (AM): No but it is not, you see.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- for both appliances.

John Biggs (AM): It is not. Response time is clearly part of it, but if you have an area of high demand then you need to have enough fire vehicles that they can get to all of the fires to which they are called.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

John Biggs (AM): Do you not accept that there is a risk to that in the proposals for which you are the midwife?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do not forget that average usage of any individual fire appliance is about 7% of the time and even in the busiest areas a fire engine is only used about 16% of the time. I want to keep as many appliances as we conceivably can; I believe in keeping appliances. Where I am less insistent on is the exact configuration of the fire stations and clearly that is going to be a discussion I will have with LFEPA. I want to see proposals that help us to continue to improve fire cover across London. That is the key question.

John Biggs (AM): My constituents are fearful that you will be putting them at risk given the nature of housing and rates of callouts in that particular borough. This is not scaremongering, this is people's genuine fear.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is scaremongering, that is exactly what it is.

John Biggs (AM): Ah, OK --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are entitled to; it is the stuff of politics.

John Biggs (AM): You are clear then with the draft proposals that you have already seen that they would not in any way jeopardise or risk fire safety for my constituents in the East End?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes I am. Absolutely nothing I have seen so far leads me to that conclusion.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, I just want to thank you and Chairman Cleverly and the Fire Commissioner for the proposed new purpose-built fire station that is planned for Mitcham in my constituency. The planning permission has just been granted by the Labour-controlled Merton Council.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I am grateful to Labour-controlled Merton Council for giving the go ahead for that fire station. It goes to show that the issue is the configuration; where they are and what good they are doing. Indeed it can be essential to open new fire stations; I have done several over my Mayoralty.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Can I have a question from Assembly Member Bacon?

Gareth Bacon (AM): Certainly. Mr Mayor, could you join me in reassuring Mr Biggs that fire engines do not respect borough boundaries and if there is an emergency callout that happens to be in a borough that neighbours Tower Hamlets, the fire appliances closest will go there quickest? Could you further reassure Mr Biggs that the current and future target first appliance time is six minutes and the second appliance time is eight minutes, and in none of the options that have been modelled - rather than the proposals that are being talked about here - do any of Tower Hamlets' response times for a first appliance below even five minutes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I think, Gareth, that that is a characteristically excellent point. That is right, but as I say none of these proposals are yet agreed. I will have a look at them and I want to make sure that they have fulfilled the criteria that I have set out repeatedly to you this morning.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): I think Mr Biggs is owed the opportunity for a point of personal -- you have to stand up to give it so we can hear you.

John Biggs (AM): I have a very brief and non-political personal explanation which is that not only are the draft proposals proposing cuts in fire cover in Tower Hamlets but, in the absence of amphibious fire engines, they also propose cuts in Islington, in Hackney and in Newham, which are the adjoining boroughs to Tower Hamlets. I think the concern is legitimate and I would repeat that concern.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Thank you. It is a point about Members challenging other Members which this is not the forum for it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Right.

3790/2012 - Rough Sleeping

Tom Copley

Will you achieve your pledge to end rough sleeping by the end of this year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Tom. It is very difficult to achieve the end of rough sleeping. What we have done is we have made great progress on dealing with the problem of rough sleepers who arrive on the streets and then find there is absolutely nobody to look after them, nobody to help them and who stay for a long time. When I became Mayor more than half of the people who were sleeping rough spent more than one night out on the streets. What we have done is institute a No Second Night Out project, which you will be familiar with, which has meant that eight out of ten rough sleepers now spend just one night on the streets. We have dealt simultaneously with the entrenched rough sleepers, the people who have been very, very difficult to help. There has been a three quarters reduction in entrenched rough sleeping.

Clearly it is a problem that is growing because there are tough economic circumstances at the moment and the numbers who are arriving on the streets have been growing, even if we are now able, through the London Delivery Board and other agencies, to help them more quickly.

Tom Copley (AM): Mr Mayor, you made a pledge in 2009. It was a very bold pledge. You said that you would end rough sleeping by the end of 2012. You reiterated that pledge during the election campaign six months ago. Can you confirm to us you are not going to meet that pledge that you made?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is certainly true, Tom, that it is proving impossible to stop people arriving on the streets in numbers. What we are doing, as I said just now, is we are dealing with them as and when they are identified much more rapidly than --

Tom Copley (AM): I will come to that point in a minute.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- happened in the past. That is the best that you can ask city authorities --

Tom Copley (AM): Mr Mayor, I am going to come back to that point in a minute.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- to achieve.

Tom Copley (AM): When did you realise that you were not going to fulfil the pledge that you made?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Plainly there has been an increase in rough sleeping over the last --

Tom Copley (AM): I know that, Mr Mayor. I have got the figures. When did you realise that you weren't? Six months ago, I remember during the election campaign, you continued to say that you would fulfil this very bold pledge that you made. When did you realise that you were not going to fulfil it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you an answer to that question, Tom --

Tom Copley (AM): You cannot give me an answer to that question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can tell you is that --

Tom Copley (AM): No change there then.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- what we are doing is we are doing our level best to help rough sleepers off the streets as fast as possible. This was not something that was happening before. I think the No Second Night Out project is a very good way forward.

Tom Copley (AM): I do want to talk about the No Second Night Out project. The figures from Broadway, which are the official figures that are recognised by rough sleeping charities, by the Government and by your office, show that the number of people rough sleeping has increased every year since 2008. Moreover, in terms of the No Second Night Out scheme, in absolute terms, the number of people spending more than one night out rough sleeping has increased every year. It has gone down slightly as a proportion of the total number of rough sleepers but in absolute terms it has gone up every year --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, it has not. It has gone down dramatically.

Tom Copley (AM): No, it has not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It has.

Tom Copley (AM): I have the figures here, Mr Mayor, from Broadway.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So have I.

Tom Copley (AM): From Broadway. In 2008/09 1,911 --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Broadway is not the only agency looking at this. I am talking about the pan-London figures. Actually the No Second Night Out scheme has done a very creditable job of

reducing the number of people who spend more than one night out on the streets and you should pay tribute to that.

Tom Copley (AM): Mr Mayor, these figures from Broadway are the ones that are recognised by the Government and by your office and they show an increase in absolute terms --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am giving you the figures for the city as a whole and I think you should give credit to the London Delivery Board and all the agencies involved in dealing with a very difficult problem driven very largely by non-UK nationals unquestionably associated with the economic difficulties the country has been facing since 2008. What they are doing, in a humane way, is trying to help people who arrive on the streets by making sure they do not spend a second night out. To achieve a situation in which 80% of rough sleepers are helped after their first night on the streets is -- only 12% now spend more than one night on the streets. That is a creditable achievement and it shows a city that cares and that is trying to deal with the problem for its clients.

Tom Copley (AM): I am afraid that clearly the figures that we have from Broadway are different to whatever figures you have got.

Finally, when are you going to publish your framework for commissioning the services for rough sleepers? The consultation closed more than a year ago and there is still no framework.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will be happy to give you an answer to that outside this meeting. I do not have the details --

Tom Copley (AM): I will write to you, Mr Mayor. Thank you, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Tom. I will make sure we give you the details of when that framework is going to be.

Listen, I am not minimising this problem. There is a problem. What I am trying to tell you is that we are dealing with it as best as we possibly can. I think the achievement of the London Delivery Board is very considerable.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Good morning. While we are on the question of rough sleeping can I just ask you a question that I asked in June about the money the Government gave you. It gave you a budget for rough sleeping of £33.8 million. £5.3 million of that was missing from your budget last year. The non-government organisations (NGOs) and the charities responsible for services to rough sleepers still do not know whether they will get this money. Can I ask you where is that money?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Nicky. The £33.8 million I can confirm will be spent in full on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

To get back to what I was saying to Tom, I think the Government's decision to give London that money was a recognition of the very active role that we have taken in leading on this question.

Forgive me, Tom. I can give you a precise answer to your question about the commissioning framework. That commissioning framework is indeed published in full on the GLA website so you can see it there now.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Can we go back to my question. Do you mind telling me where the £5.3 million is because it is not in the budget?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I recall the £5.3 million became a canard --

Nicky Gavron (AM): It was missing from your budget last year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- during the election campaign and people went around saying that we had somehow snaffled £5.3 million or whatever it was from the homelessness budget. That is not true. We are committing £33.8 million to that.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Yes, but you have not accounted for that money anywhere. Let me just ask you a final question. Will you reinstate the missing £5.3 million in your next budget? It was not in your last one. People want reassurance that that £5.3 million has not just gone to something else and that it will be spent on rough sleeping services.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It will be.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Will you reinstate it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can give you a categorical assurance, Nicky, that we will spend in full £33.8 million --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Will you reinstate it in your budget?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It follows from what I am saying --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Can we see it in your budget after Christmas?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You will not get a different answer by shouting. We are absolutely determined to --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Sorry, I will say it quietly. Can we see it in your budget after Christmas?!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will spend £33.8 million, as I have said repeatedly, on tackling homelessness in London.

3767/2012 - Fares (1)

Richard Tracey

In your view, is it possible to bear down on fares, whilst opposing virtually every cost saving measure introduced by TfL over the last 4 years?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Dick. Thank you for your question. You are quite right of course. It is not possible to claim that you are going to cut fares by 7%, or whatever it was, while simultaneously opposing every penny piece of reform and cost saving in Transport for London (TfL). That was plainly, in a hotly contested field, one of the more ludicrous aspects of the manifesto of the Labour Party at the last Mayoral election.

Richard Tracey (AM): I asked you this question because clearly through your management of TfL we have seen the progress on £6 million worth of upgrades, we have seen Crossrail being built, we are seeing the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) being improved, we have seen hybrid cleaner buses and so on. As you have just mentioned the Labour Party during the election campaign promoted a fares policy that would have taken £1.14 billion out of the TfL budget and, at the same time as that, they were proposing to set up a cross river tram, Thames Gateway bridge, DLR extensions to Dagenham Dock and Rainham, and a north London tram that I seem to recollect rambled around north London. Do you think they have now quietly forgotten and abandoned all those promises they made to the electorate in May?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think those promises were made in the happy assumption that they would never be in a position to fulfil them. They were completely nonsensical. What we are able to do by sensible management of the TfL budgets is deliver massive improvements to the Tube, the upgrades that Londoners want to see, new signalling on vital transport arteries in London, the Northern line and we are going to go ahead with the upgrade of the Piccadilly line and the sub-surface lines. We have done new lifts at Farringdon Station, overhauled the Central line and so on. Bank Station, an absolutely vital transformation of Bank Station and Victoria which need to go ahead. All these things would have been put at risk by the policy adopted by the [Labour] Party - or at least a large chunk of them. They never convincingly explained the logic of their proposals and that is why, in the end, they were rejected. It is a credit to that Party that they seem quietly to have dropped it now.

Richard Tracey (AM): In order to make it perhaps possible to keep control on fares and indeed bring them down can I, once again from this side, suggest that we can make further economies by driverless trains and by some sensible legislation from the Government prohibiting strikes without a proper mandate.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): John [Biggs] wants passenger-less trains! That is a classic Labour solution. The nirvana of Labour policy! What we want to achieve is an Underground system that is safe and fast and gets people where they need to go. That does not necessarily mean that you will not have people on the trains at all. It is vital that London Underground (LU) continues to staff our trains, and they will.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): And they could go on strike.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see no reason why they should.

3771/2012 - A United Emergency Service

Gareth Bacon

What will you be doing to take forward the ideas in "A United Emergency Service" regarding co-locating different emergency services?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Gareth. I think this is an excellent idea. I look forward to discussing it with you, with James [Cleverly AM, Chair, LFEPA] and with Stephen Greenhalgh. Let's see what we can do to take this forward.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am grateful for that offer. I suppose one subsidiary question that I could ask precisely is that some time ago when the Merton Control Centre was opened by the London Fire Authority overtures were made to other emergency services in London about the possibility of co-locating their call centres there. There was not a lot of interest from the other emergency services so, as part of this process, could you perhaps apply some pressure on them to perhaps reconsider that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. This is one of those things that starts to get stifled by the competing baronies of the police, the fire brigade and ambulance service when logic might dictate that they co-locate and they think about rationalising the service. This is one of the areas where, again, we need to move beyond sentiment, superstition and see what we can achieve.

Gareth Bacon (AM): The time is perhaps opportune. Much of the meeting today has been talking about the estates of the fire service and the police service. We talked about Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and where they are located. The London Ambulance Service does not yet come under your remit but perhaps it should. Will you use the momentum from this meeting to perhaps engage in discussions with those services to see if we can take it forward?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. What I have asked is for MOPAC and LFEPA, via James, to get together and take this thing forward as fast as possible.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am grateful.

Tony Arbour (AM): In light of this discussion on co-location of the emergency services will you please revisit the proposal to have a single blue light museum? I am very conscious that at a time of economies forced on us by the wastefulness of the previous Government, museums and things of that sort are likely to be overlooked. Clearly there is going to be an opportunity with the vacating of premises to improve the services for us to be able to have a blue light museum.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is. Tony, it is a very good point. I know that Munira Murza, Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture, has been round to look at the Black Museum, for instance, and it is a fantastic asset. I have actually never been round it myself but I can well imagine how you could integrate the police --

Tony Arbour (AM): I imagine you will be able to see it one day.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A wonderful police and crime museum with the fire museum in Southwark at a new location and it would be a real attraction for Londoners and tell a fascinating story of the history of this city.

Tony Arbour (AM): Thank you, Chair.

Roger Evans (AM): Would it not also be a good idea, Mr Mayor, to consider some work towards joint visits to communities as well? At the moment we have crime prevention officers going out and telling people to lock things up and then fire prevention officers going out and telling them to unlock them again. When the fire brigade go out to install smoke alarms it often means they have to take the fire engine and all four members of the crew out with them just to install smoke alarms at a particular location. Might it not be a good idea to actually combine a number of these visits together and use fewer people to provide a more integrated and broad reaching service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that is an excellent idea, Roger. Can I propose that we take that forward. I am interested in what you say about these visits; that are mutually counter productive. I will look into that.

3796/2012 - Fares and the London Living Wage

Valerie Shawcross

How did your upcoming announcement on fare levels for 2013 affect the London Living Wage rate you announced on 5th November?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Val. Yes. You have asked whether the upcoming announcement on fares from January took account of the uprating of the London Living Wage. Conventionally in this country uprating of benefits and so on does not take account of future prices or future Retail Price Index (RPI) and that was why it was done as it was. I am glad that we are able to continue to increase the London Living Wage. London Citizens are making great, great progress in spreading that message. We are doing everything we can to help in the GLA. We had a great session the other morning. It is a good thing that the London Living Wage continues to put extra cash into the pockets of some of the neediest and hardest working people in London.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Yes, we support the London Living Wage. It is not a benefit; people work for it. Would you accept, Mr Mayor, that in 2009 you raised the London Living Wage by 2% and then the fares went up by 7.1% after that. In 2010 the London Living Wage went up by 3.3% and then the fare announcement was 6.8%. This year the London Living Wage has gone up by 3% - we welcome any increase - and then the fares are going up, from January, by 4.2%?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You do accept then that you are increasing fares at a faster rate than you are increasing the London Living Wage. Do you also accept then that causes a problem for lower paid families?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let me explain that the -- which of course always happened under the previous Mayor as well because the London Living Wage never --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You have put the fares up at twice the rate that Ken [Livingstone, Former Labour Mayor] did so there is a bigger problem being caused.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Under your administration and the administration you supported it was always the case that fares went up by a higher percentage than the London Living Wage - or virtually always on aggregate --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Yes, but you have put the fares up by double the rate that they used to go up by --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With a soupçon of intellectual honesty you would concede that.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): -- so there is a bigger gap here.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The London Living Wage is calculated by quite a complicated system that involves looking at the costs incurred by a selection of London households and then calculating the wage required to meet those costs. That is one way. The second way identifies the median income for London approximately weighted for 11 household types then takes 60% of that median income. You then average those two figures and you add 15%. In that basket, transport is obviously factored in but as you can imagine it is not a massive component of the weekly cost. On any assumption were the London Living Wage to rise by 3% again next year, as you might reasonably expect that it would, it would more than compensate. That would be the equivalent to a rise of £9.61 per week which would be more than compensating for what is effectively -- if you look at the cost of the rise in a monthly Zone 1 Oyster Travelcard of £1.25 that well outweighs --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am trying to give Londoners the proper comparison.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, you are trying to give me a technical answer and I appreciate the accuracy and the detail with which you are attending to this --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which is what you need. You need a detailed technical answer.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): For the lower paid people --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You need to be lathered with technicalities here.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): There are two problems with this. Firstly you have just basically outlined a system whereby the London Living Wage gets updated by some reference to what the fare increase was last year. Actually, most people get paid the London Living Wage next year in the new pay round, when they are already paying not just last year's fare increases but the new fare increase --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know. I understand that, Val.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): If you are low paid you have got to get to work --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am trying to explain.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You cannot --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are making a false comparison. What I was laboriously trying to say is you are making a false comparison.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): The point I am trying to make, Mr Mayor, is this is not just a technical issue --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): -- it is about hardship. People have got to pay these fares to get to work and the fares have been going up really rapidly. The London Living Wage --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know. What I am trying to say is -- you are making a comparison between the London Living Wage and fares.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): -- is not matching it. There is another problem I wanted to raise with you, while we are on your technical debate here, Boris. The other issue is if you dig into that report you will see that the reference point on what the transport costs are for low paid Londoners is based on Zones 1 to 3 Travelcard so you are already in trouble if you live in Zones 4, 5 or 6 and people are increasingly having to move out. Why don't you look at basing the London Living Wage on something that is more fairly representative of people's enforced costs on transport?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I am trying to get at is that actually, in real terms, in cash terms, the increase in the London Living Wage more than outweighs the increase in transport costs for the average family. That was the point of my lengthy explanation just now.

You are making a reasonable point about outer London and costs in outer London. I am concerned to make sure that the Tube in particular remains value for people living in outer London. I point out that even with the increase Tube travel outside Zone 1 -- I will give you an example. A Zone 2 to 6 off peak fare of £1.50 would cover a journey from Heathrow to Earls Court on the Piccadilly line or from Richmond round to Stratford on the Overground. You can get a long way in outer London on quite a reasonable fare. That is an important point.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, you admit there are some issues here --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I would be grateful if you would look at them again before next year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Val, what I said to you repeatedly in our long conversations about this in the run up to my fares decision was of course I look at the impact of fares on the lowest paid and of course we have to take that into consideration. But we have protected every single one of the concessions that Londoners have and do not forget Londoners have these unlike virtually any other city in

Britain. Nowhere else has a 24 hour Freedom Pass for older people. No one else has the benefits that we have for young people. It is still the case that the average bus fare in this city is about 65p compared to £1 in other cities --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): All right. I will leave it there, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and that is because of the way we have been able to use our funds to bear down on fares while simultaneously getting Londoners the improvements in infrastructure that they want.

Your point about the impact of costs of transport on lower paid people is absolutely understood by me and by this administration but when you compare the -- where I think you have gone wrong, intellectually, is trying to say that the increase in the London Living Wage is smaller than the fares increase because when you look at the figures --.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Chair, if I may, he has made the point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am entitled to give a long answer to a question that deserves a proper answer --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I would be grateful if he did not use up any more time repeating himself.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): When you look at the figures you can see that in cash terms the increase in the London Living Wage more than outweighs the increase in transport costs.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I would like to see you live on it, Boris.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair):Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair):Kit Malthouse (AM): Mr Mayor, there is another party to the London Living Wage which is employers. It is important, in what is a voluntary scheme, that employers do not see sudden increases in the London Living Wage that might undermine it as a voluntary scheme and might restrict the uptake of it. Would you therefore support the proposal by London Citizens that into the formula there should be some kind of damping mechanism to make sure that there are not sudden unpredictable rises in the London Living Wage which might not only undermine its progress in London but cause businesses to withdraw?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The London Living Wage has, as you know, gone up 25p, £8.55 from £8.30. We are asking business to pay this. Thank you, Val, for your support; you have been there right from the beginning. The success of the campaign that has been run by London Citizens, with our active support, is that companies are signing up. That is what we want to see. They are doing it voluntarily because they understand the benefits it brings to their employees in terms of loyalty and productivity and actually helping them to reduce employment costs. You must be careful not to deter them by being unreasonable.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Would you agree that one of the most valuable parts of the London Living Wage is the fact that, as you say, it is voluntary by employers and therefore it injects an element of moral obligation into running a business and that any prospect of naming and shaming employers that do not participate in

the Living Wage is likely actually to have a detrimental effect on its progress in London, particularly amongst –small businesses?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would rather have a hearty round of applause for those who join the scheme than excoriation for those who have not yet signed up. We are expanding. We want to expand and we welcome everybody into the fold. I do not want to have a kind of anti-business mindset in this place.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Finally, would you also agree that one of the important aspects to the progress in the London Living Wage is that there is a cross-party consensus in London that it should be something that is promoted and therefore any attempt by national political leaders to purloin it as somehow their property and somehow their policy breaches that arrangement and therefore is also likely to deter companies from joining if it becomes an overtly political tool.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think there is something in that. One of the achievements of London Citizens is the style in which they conducted this campaign which has been very consensual and very non-political. That works. It gets people on board. Business people do not want to feel they are being co-opted into a political campaign; they want to feel they are doing something that is good for their employees and good for the country, and that is what it is.

Kit Malthouse (AM): And good for businesses.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, you are quite right that the London Living Wage should be cross-party but public agencies themselves should set an example. I raised the example the other day with you of Hackney council who are advertising jobs at £6.10 an hour and yet, at the same time, claiming that they supported the London Living Wage. Since that, Hackney have now decided they are no longer going to do that.

Could you possibly turn your attention again to the practices by Hackney which at this moment takes on employers Compass Group -- I do not wish to excoriate Compass Group. I am just saying without mentioning the London Living Wage, they have been happy to get into a contract with the Compass Group for school catering staff and I have a payslip in front of me that gives their hourly rate as £5.46. Now if supposed supporters of the London Living Wage are not even saying to their sub-contractors that there should be some kind of buy-in to the London Living Wage are we going to be successful? I hope that you are going to pay some attention to that next time you talk to Hackney council.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To Mayor [Jules] Pipe, yes, I certainly shall. It is a very interesting point. I was not aware of that, Andrew.

Andrew Boff (AM): Arguably, that is below the minimum wage, let alone the London Living Wage.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. That is something that I will certainly make sure that - I hope someone is taking due note of this - I will bring up with Hackney next time we have that conversation. The GLA does its best to make sure all our contractors pay the London Living Wage. Where there are historic contracts - and I anticipate the objection of Andrew - that need to be changed in favour of the London Living Wage that will happen when those contracts are renewed.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Can I just interrupt here a moment? Assembly Member Dismore, I am going to refer you to a standing order section 2.10(b) and it requires Members to listen respectfully in silence whilst others are speaking. I think the wittering and the interventions from Members is getting out of hand now. Sorry about that, Assembly Member Malthouse, can you carry on your question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I really must protest.

Kit Malthouse (AM): He [John Biggs AM] is doing it constantly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is being wound up and there is being wound up. I am now told by my friend, Biggsy [John Biggs AM], that I am a tax avoider's friend when he supported a candidate at the last election who to my certain knowledge was engaged in the most outrageous racket.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): I do not know that we need to hear about the conversation you two are having. Can I also call upon Assembly Member Biggs and say that if I have to speak to him again about his barracking of the Mayor then I will use section 2.10(b) of the Authority's Standing Orders.

[Andrew Dismore AM comments off-microphone.]

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Assembly Member Dismore please. You are not in Parliament now; you are here at City Hall. Let's move on to the next question and it is in the name of Assembly Member Steve O'Connell, and it is Wandle Valley Park.

3769/2012 - Wandle Valley Park

Steve O'Connell

Do you support the emerging Wandle Valley Park?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do support the creation of Wandle Valley Park. I fully support that. I think it is a wonderful objective. We put in £400,000 to improve Wandle Valley Park through the London Help a Park programme. £700,000 through the Outer London Fund. A number of interventions along the Wandle Valley: improved pedestrian cycle links between Colliers Wood tube Station, improved access to the Merton Walking Trail and so on. We share your objectives, comrade.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. We are delighted across the four boroughs in south west London that this is evolving. Do you agree that the emerging Wandle Valley Park would truly be an Olympic legacy for south west London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It would be fabulous. I hope very much that we can work together with all the councils involved - I know it is something Dick [Richard Tracey AM] has written an excellent paper on - to achieve that.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I was going to mention particularly the paper that has recently been published by my colleague, Richard Tracey, which in particular is calling for the annual Lee Valley Park council levy to be ended within five years. Pursuing that point, Mr Mayor, do you not agree that

the funding that the boroughs give currently to Lee Valley Park, those local boroughs particularly, would be better spent locally on that localism project?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that this is a levy that dates from 1966. It is a historic curiosity. It has been reduced. There have been efforts to shave it in the last couple of years; I think it has decreased about 2% for 2012/13. I think people in south London are entitled to speculate on the long-term future of that subsidy.

You will know that it requires an Act of Parliament to change it. We will have to look very carefully at the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and what they do and the risk to the facilities that they offer there by taking away that subvention.

I want to support the Wandle Valley Park. I want to support both regional parks. My policy on cake, as you know, is pro having it and pro eating it! That is what I want to achieve. I think what we need to do, to be absolutely clear because this is an argument that, frankly, I think I need to go over in more detail. I want to support the Wandle Valley Park. I am not yet reconciled to the proposal from Dick [Richard Tracey AM] which is basically we should drop the subsidy to the Lee Valley from elsewhere. I think we need to look pretty carefully at what the results of that would be before we went down that track.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Mr Mayor, this may well not be a case of either or but would you not agree --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It might be.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Legislation, an idea back in 1966, may have been a good idea at that time, perhaps, a time of plenty; but now we have a situation where boroughs, mine in Croydon, has to cough up something like £370,000 and, looking at the number of visitors, that comes out at something like £12 a visit.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sure.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Where I used to live in Lewisham, again that is a £12 subsidy per visit which is unsustainable. Surely, Mr Mayor, you do admit that we do need to look at this and rebalance the funding arrangements?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. As Dick [Richard Tracey AM] points out in his paper a visitor from Hounslow is effectively paying £39.45 for going into the Lee Valley Regional Park whereas a visitor from Waltham Forest is paying 60p if you look at the frequency of the visits. There is an issue of equity but the Lee Valley Regional Park has a big responsibility to discharge Olympic legacy in that area, they are responsible for the Velo Park and they are responsible for large parts of that Olympic legacy and we have just got to be careful that we do not prejudice that by cutting those funds off. What I am saying to you today is that I want to look at this in more detail.

Steve O'Connell (AM): OK. My point is around the balancing act, particularly on Olympic legacy. We are very conscious and we want an Olympic legacy for south London and south west London. The Wandle Regional Park would be very much an attractive legacy.

Mr Mayor, my last point, turning back to our Wandle Valley Park, I believe in December you will be launching the Strategic Green Spaces Fund. I am certain very much that the Wandle Valley Park will be bidding and I hope very much that that bid would be smiled upon by you when it comes across your desk.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What is certainly true is you want to support the Wandle Valley Park. That I think we can probably all unite on first and let's bite more deeply into this question of what Dick [Richard Tracey AM] calls the Lee Valley Park tax and how it falls on Londoners. Defenders of the Lee Valley Park tax will of course want to make their points and that is valid.

Steve O'Connell (AM): We just seek fairness, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Have you finished, Assembly Member O'Connell?

Steve O'Connell (AM): Just about.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, those of us who are associated with the Wandle Valley Park do believe that this is a very unfair anachronism, this levy, which has been in place, first of all, under the Greater London Council from 1966 and then from 1986 it was passed to the London boroughs. Each of the 32 London boroughs plus the City are paying anything between £200,000 and £400,000 a year to keep the Lee Valley Park subsidised, in effect. The Park Authority could simply charge its visitors £2.50 a head, we calculate, and that would replace the £8.7 million which the boroughs are producing.

I would just say to Members opposite that it is not simply a Conservative unfairness because in Len Duvall's constituency they are paying anything between £12 and, in the case of Lewisham, again £12 subsidy. Val Shawcross will be interested that Lambeth is paying £20 a head subsidy and in Southwark £12 a head subsidy. Onkar Sahota in Ealing, almost £15 a head. In Hillingdon almost £10 a head. Andrew Dismore, he is closer in his constituency in Barnet; they are only on £6 a head subsidy. In Camden nearly £13 a head subsidy. You can understand why we believe that this is unfair and it really is out of date. I have written to Eric Pickles [Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government] to ask for some change and I hope you will join me in doing the same, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I hear you, Dick. I greatly respect the work you put into this and your suggestions are very interesting. However, it would be unusual, first of all, for us to have a system of actively charging the public to go to a park. To be demanding an increase in fees for access to open space when we want to tackle obesity and we want to encourage people to get out would be a counter intuitive thing to be doing right now. Number two there are plenty of things across London that all Londoners support. I can think of Crossrail, for instance, which does not have the same benefits across the city. The Olympics themselves did not have the same benefits across the city but we supported that project because it was fantastic for London as a whole.

I will look at the case that you make but I have to say that you must bear in mind the Lee Valley Regional Park does have important responsibilities for four venues and a substantial chunk of the Olympic Park area. I am saying I am going to look at the argument but we have got to be very careful before we cut that off because we are talking about essential funding there.

Richard Tracey (AM): I accept that, Mr Mayor, but it is not simply open space in Lee Valley of course. There are a number of sporting sites, not just the Olympic ones, and camp sites and several heritage houses which of course people visit and might well expect to pay to do so.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is an interesting point. If there are heritage houses that are currently not charging but could charge and would somehow help to put the Park into balance then I am interested in that. I do not have any personal knowledge. I am looking anxiously around the room to see if anybody can elucidate me. We will look at it. That is my undertaking.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair):3416/2012 - New Taxi for London

Stephen Knight

Will you agree to run a design competition for a new iconic, zero emission, black cab for London, following the news that Manganese Bronze Holdings PLC – the maker of London’s iconic black cab – has fallen into administration?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Stephen, yes, is the answer; it is happening already in the sense that the market is now incredibly active. Obviously, we do not have the same relationship to taxis as we do to buses. We do not have contracts with London taxi drivers in the way we have contracts with London bus companies. So it is a different kettle of fish. But I can tell you, without wishing to give the game away, that we are in active discussion with several manufacturers about their ideas for iconic new designs.

Stephen Knight (AM): I am encouraged by that answer, Mr Mayor. Given that taxis have a 15 year service life you will agree with me, presumably, that the sooner we take action to ensure that all new vehicles entering the fleet are zero emission then the sooner we can phase out diesel emissions across the entire fleet. What date, Mr Mayor, would you like to set for all taxis in London entering the fleet to be zero emission?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you for that. We are going to make an announcement about this, but not today. I think there is scope to speed it up. We need to get a little bit further in our conversations with the manufacturers and you can expect to hear a lot more about that in the early part of next year.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, in the city of Amsterdam, you might be interested to know, you can already drive a fully electric London taxi. I think many Londoners will find it slightly odd that if one goes to Amsterdam where they have a target of 500 such electric taxis by 2015 being in operation on the streets one can drive a fully electric London taxi whereas, in London, one cannot. In Amsterdam they have achieved that through a subsidy scheme. You promised a subsidy scheme in 2009 and we have still not seen details of that announced. In 2009 you promised a Cleaner Taxi Fund, Mr Mayor. It is now towards the end of 2012 and we have still not seen any details. When are we actually going to see that announcement of some kind of scheme where you are going to put money into ensuring we clean up our taxi fleet?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Come on. We have done a great deal to clean up taxis in London. It is the first administration to have an age limit for taxis. That nettle was never grasped before. We are

determined, as I say, to go forward with zero tailpipe emission taxis. I do want to set a more aggressive timetable for that but, with great respect to you, you are asking the right kind of question but, if I may, I do not want to make the announcement today.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, I question why you do not want to make the announcement today because I repeatedly ask you about this issue and you repeatedly say that there is some announcement that is due to happen and yet we have been waiting since 2009 since you have first been saying this and we have still not had any concrete plans announced by your administration on concrete proposals to clean up taxis and to have zero emission vehicles. I ask you again, if Amsterdam can achieve 500 fully electric taxis in the city by 2015 when is London going to achieve the same target?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): How many have Amsterdam got on the streets now?

Stephen Knight (AM): Amsterdam has a subsidy scheme in place now, Mr Mayor, that is going to achieve that target by 2015. You have no such subsidy scheme in place. When are you going to have it in place?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Actually what we have done, as you know, is the charging point scheme, put a substantial number of charging points around the city, and we have been supporting hydrogen cabs. I was not aware that you had been here since 2009, Stephen.

Stephen Knight (AM): I am capable of reading what you said even then.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can take it that we see the scope for an ambitious approach to zero carbon taxis. What I can confidently assert is that London will be comfortably in the lead over Amsterdam.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, this is not a trivial point. We know from the data that taxis in central London produce 25% of all particulate emissions. We know that London is failing to meet safety standards for particulate emissions and we know that taxis are a large part of the problem. How long are Londoners going to have to put up with air that is poisonous to breathe as a result of lack of action? If Amsterdam can do it why can't you in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With great respect to you, I think that we are going to be well ahead of Amsterdam. I do not think it is quite clear from your account of what is going on there how many electric taxis they yet have on the streets. What I can tell you is we have more electric cars here in London, more zero tail pipe emission cars, than any other city in Europe; we are continuing to expand zero tail pipe emission strategies and we have got the cleanest greenest new bus in the world on the streets. I know that that has the strong support of the Liberal Democrats; the new Routemaster bus. If you can just contain yourself a little bit we will be making an announcement about an aggressive strategy for zero tail pipe emission taxis as well.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, people have the right to be a little bit sceptical. You mention your new Routemaster bus and the truth is that that bus is going to have worse particulate emissions than many existing diesel buses that you can buy.

When are we going to start tackling particulate emissions from the public vehicle fleet in London; buses and taxis?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are taking this very aggressive tone - which I supposed you are entitled to do as a member of the coalition. Speaking to my brother coalition member. On particulates, on PM_{10s}, we have done extremely well. London is on target -- we are going to meet our targets. Where we have greater difficulties is over nitrous oxide and on carbon dioxide (CO₂). On that the new bus is fantastic and it is a vehicle that you should be offering fervent support.

Stephen Knight (AM): Finally --

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Assembly Member Knight you are out of time.

Stephen Knight (AM): The clock says I have still got six seconds. Can I finally press you, are we expecting your announcement on taxis in days, weeks, months or years?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In the fullness, the richness and the maturity of time you will be getting the answer that you hunger for. I promise you it will be a good one. It will be very, very exciting. Watch this space. Listen, seriously, I am grateful to you and -- actually I think it was Mike Tuffrey [former Assembly Member]. This is the Mike Tuffrey memorial question. That is right. It wasn't you. It was Tuffers who used to ask this question. Thank you for asking the Mike Tuffrey memorial question. The answer is yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Ridiculous. Can I now move to the next question.

3795/2012 - Fuel Poverty

Murad Qureshi

Have you shown enough political leadership to tackle fuel poverty in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Murad, I am very concerned about fuel prices in London. You have seen what is going on at the moment; the attempts to deal with a cartel with price fixing by the energy companies. I totally support that. In London we have done a number of things to try to address the real problems of fuel poverty that affect particularly elderly people and people on fixed incomes. Number one, to help them to make their homes more fuel efficient, the RE:NEW programme has dealt with 67,000 homes so far. Number two, to make them aware of their rights and to tackle fuel poverty by highlighting the kind of cash support that is available to Londoners. The Know Your Rights campaign that we launched last year made sure an extra £500,000 went to Londoners and particularly elderly Londoners who were not aware of the support they can get and are entitled to, to deal with fuel poverty.

I am concerned about the prices at the moment. They are extortionate. The initiative that the Government is now pursuing, which is to force energy companies to offer the lowest rate, is a promising way forward.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. It is estimated that for every 1% increase in energy prices it pushes about 40,000 households nationally into fuel poverty. We saw evidence of that yesterday when we went to Peckham Food Bank and had a very moving account of a mother who has had to choose between

heating the home or feeding her kids. That is why she was at the food bank this week. That is already happening even before the energy hikes have actually kicked in. She is a British Gas consumer. She has been by 6% increases. Lord knows what EDF customers, who are going to get an 11% hit, are going to do.

Now there is nothing you and I can do on the national front but in the London context there is no doubt the energy companies could have done a lot better with their own home energy efficiency programmes. Your own office has stated that we have lost out in £350 million worth of funding. What I want to know is what discussions have you had with the energy companies themselves on addressing this gross imbalance of activity on the home energy efficiencies which they were obliged to do in the first place?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have repeatedly had the energy companies in. What they are getting away with at the moment is the claim that they are obliged to spend so much on renewables and energy efficiency of one kind or another and their claim is that that is pushing up the cost of providing energy. Whether or not that is true is very, very hard for me to evaluate. I happen to think that the energy policy of this country is in chaos at the moment and we need to sort it out. That is why I have just set up for London this high level group working with all the energy generating companies, with developers and with councils to look at what is going on with energy supply in this city because the prices are going up but supply is increasingly insecure. It is pretty obvious to everybody that the current strategy is incoherent. We seem to be going for more and more wind farms which are not actually doing the job.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I do not think that is the issue which I am particularly focusing on; it is what they were committed to do and they have not done. I do think you have got a moral responsibility to hang them on this issue very, very clearly. They have not delivered and at the same time they have got themselves a huge amount of publicity. You just have to look at the EDF publicity they got over the Olympics when they went around with a green Union Flag and they have hit Londoners with an 11% increase in prices almost straight after the Olympics. Have you actually raised this issue as well with Government and the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I have.

Murad Qureshi (AM): What have you got out of Ed Davey [Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change]? He is a Greater London MP. He should be aware of these issues.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have brought it up repeatedly over a long period. I remember going in to see a chap called Ed Miliband [Leader of the Labour Party and Leader of the Opposition] who showed absolutely no understanding of it whatever --

Murad Qureshi (AM): We are dealing with the here and now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- as Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. I remember the conversation I had with him and I said what we needed --

Murad Qureshi (AM): Can we stick with Ed Davey the present Secretary of State.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- was a massive campaign in this city and throughout the country to improve the insulation and quality of energy efficiency in people's homes. I said it would drive the economy

and it would be a fantastic thing for London and for the rest of the country. I have to say, dear Ed showed absolutely no interest. He barely understood what retrofitting was.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I asked what ...

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Since then of course we have kept our pressure on Government to do this. I have talked to colleagues in Government repeatedly about this. What we have been able to do to Greg Barker [Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change] and to others --

Murad Qureshi (AM): Mr Mayor, I did not ask you that question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we have been able to do is 67,000 homes retrofitted. I appreciate that that is a drop in the bucket in London, but it is a start.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Sorry, that did not actually answer my question at all. I mentioned another person's name and you obviously have not been in touch with him.

Can I ask you about your own programme --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, I have been in touch with Greg Barker who is responsible for this and my Office has been in touch with the Department repeatedly for a long time.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Well, that is what you did not answer at the beginning. Can I move on? Your own programme. You promised in the last term that you would do 200,000 home energy retrofits under the Mayor's programme. You delivered just under 70,000. In this Mayoral term you are committed to 20,000 up until January. Do you not have any other plans after January given that energy price hikes are dropping most Londoners into fuel poverty?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you the figures, but we are committed to --

Murad Qureshi (AM): That ceases after that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, we are committed to expanding our policy of retrofitting. For people listening to this who wonder what on earth retrofitting is it is stuff that you can do that will improve the energy efficiency of your home and in many cases it can save you up to £180 a year on your bills and that is a considerable saving for many people. I do not pledge that we can do that in all homes and in many cases the housing stock in London does not make it easy for us to do this but we are going ahead, as I say, with a programme that I think not only offers the opportunity for home owners to cut their bills but also offers massive scope for employment. I think it is a shame that successive Governments have not taken this up more vigorously.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I will just make one point. We are losing 625 jobs in the insulation industry.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Have you got a question for the Mayor?

Murad Qureshi (AM): I am just noting that and that is all I have for now.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Have you got a question for the Mayor?

Murad Qureshi (AM): I have not.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Now we have got eight questions left and so I must ask the Assembly to agree to suspend standing orders?

All: Agreed.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): 3797/2012 - NHS London and strategic planning around health in London

Fiona Twycross

Is the Mayor concerned about the removal of integrated planning with the imminent end of NHS London at the end of the year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The answer is in short, Fiona, that I am concerned about the removal of integrated planning. I do not want to see NHS London dismantled in the way that it has been. As I have said repeatedly before to Onkar [Sahota AM], I do not run the health service in London in the way that we do for instance with transport or police. It is vital that we have a strategic view about what is going on and we are able to look at it even if my opinions will obviously have less granular detail than on those other subjects. We have already had conversations with the NHS National Commissioning Board London office in the form of Anne Rainsberry [Regional Director (London)]. I am going to be making sure that Simon Tanner [Health Adviser to the Greater London Authority], who you will know is giving us regular accounts and is in regular dialogue with the NHS about the changes and the structures that are emerging.

It is a difficult area and I just repeat the pledge I made; I will fight unnecessary changes but where sensible changes are being proposed I think it is my job to stand for them.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Good. OK. One of the things I welcomed when it was announced which was not intended entirely to replace NHS London was the fact that you proposed and got agreed the London Health Improvement Board which you chair. I just wanted some clarification about the role of the London Health Improvement Board which we understand will not have any statutory basis?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I think it was a shame that the Government chopped the statutory basis out of the London Health Improvement Board. I think that was completely wrong but we will get on with what I think is a vital job of tackling -- what I want the London Health Improvement Board (LHIB) to do is to tackle particular scourges that affect Londoners. We are looking at cancer, we are looking at obesity and we are looking at alcohol abuse.

If you go to New York you see a city where one of the top subjects in New York is the engagement of the city in public health campaigns. People talk endlessly about what the Mayor of New York is doing to ban trans fats or super-sized cola and all the rest of it.

Fiona Twycross (AM): I welcome that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is something unfortunately for which we have neither statutory responsibility nor funding to do, but there is a role --

Fiona Twycross (AM): It was the funding I was wanting to ...

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- for City Hall in bringing boroughs together to create those campaigns.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Can we have a point of clarification on the funding because, previously, up to 6% of funding for health improvement in London could have been allocated to the London Health Improvement Board. Can you confirm how big a proportion will now be going to the London Health Improvement Board?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you that now, Fiona. I would be happy to write to you.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK. Thank you. Can you confirm, given the role of the London Health Improvement Board, what you think your role in relation to public health will be?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I want to repeat what I was saying. I think there should be a role for City Hall in raising aware -- it is what Rosie Boycott [Chair of London Food] was doing the other day about fast food. I see no harm at all in us trying to raise public awareness of real problems that disproportionately affect Londoners; obesity and diabetes. We have massive problems here in London that are more acute in parts of London than anywhere else in the country. These are legitimate matters for a strategic authority such as ours to take a view on. That is what I want the LHIB to do.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Will you continue to lobby for it to have a statutory basis so that it will have teeth?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I repeat; I thought it was wrong of the Government to excise statutory basis from the LHIB.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK. Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Thank you. Thank you to Assembly Member Boff. He has withdrawn his question on rail freight depot employment boost for Barking. So the next question is a question in the name of Assembly Member Evans on retention of DNA.

3766/2012 - Retention of DNA

Roger Evans

I understand since May 2012, citizens of the UK are entitled to seek early deletion of DNA records from police systems through the Protection of Freedom Act, although this is a lengthy and laborious process. How long do you think it should take for innocent UK citizens to remove their DNA records from the system?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Roger. I understand you have a particular constituency interest in this matter. There is a balance to be struck. DNA is plainly an incredibly powerful tool of detection now and of solving crimes but where innocent people have their DNA stored by the Government, by the police and by the national DNA database they should be able, after a reasonable period of time, to withdraw it. That is the purpose of the Protection of Freedom Act. Exactly how long that period is, is not clear to me either from the notes I have before me but I will make sure that we get you an answer.

Roger Evans (AM): To be honest it is not entirely clear to me which is why I asked the question. I think there should be some sort of target for the Metropolitan Police Service to meet otherwise it makes a mockery of calling something an early deletion process.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The informal answer I was given was it was three years but I do not see that in the statute and I want to know why not.

Roger Evans (AM): I do feel that three years is an inordinately long amount of time for people who may have had their sample taken just because they were arrested and who might not even have been charged, or indeed for people who might have volunteered a sample if you have a crime that you want cleared up in the area and you ask people to come forward. It would help to encourage volunteers and to encourage confidence in the police service in London if we could have a much shorter time and if we could feel that objections to it were raised on the grounds of genuine criminal justice issues rather than just to prevent a legal or bureaucratic precedent being set which is the feeling I am getting at the moment.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes is the answer. I understand you have a constituent who is particularly concerned about the retention of his DNA. I have sympathy with him. We will do our best to give him a more positive answer about exactly when he could expect his personal DNA material to be purged from the system.

Roger Evans (AM): Thank you. I am grateful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All I can say is there is a Protection of Freedom Act which is intended to allow people to remove their DNA from the system. What I cannot tell you from any stuff I have before me, or indeed from interrogating my officials, is exactly how fast that will be.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Would you also though in considering your views about this bear in mind, Mr Mayor, that there are particular crime types that take place over a number of years that require the retention of DNA over that period. For example, Kirk Reid was apprehended six years after his first offence and of course the criminal who became known as the Night Stalker some 20 years after his first offence when DNA samples were taken. Therefore we have to bear in mind that particularly where sexual offences are concerned these linked series which are often hard to detect can take some time to come to fruition.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): People will have their own views about how the system should work. Plainly, if every person in this country were obliged to contribute his or her DNA preemptively to a national DNA database so that the police could more swiftly solve crimes that might be a very efficient thing. On the other hand people would have to have a great deal of confidence that the system was not going to let them down in some catastrophic way and that the personal data that they had furnished about themselves was not going somehow to be abused. There would have to be a great deal of confidence in that system.

Kit Malthouse (AM): I agree with you and, obviously, we have to be careful about the exception proving the rule but what also has to be taken into account - I hope you would agree - is technology and improvements in technology. It was an improvement in technology of course and therefore better matching of DNA that apprehended the killers of Stephen Lawrence some 18 years plus after their original arrest and therefore DNA samples would have been taken. If they had had the right to expunge their DNA from the record then that successful conclusion, albeit very long after the offence, may not have happened.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The Act is there. It allows for innocent people to seek the early deletion of DNA from their records. I think reasonable people may differ. It is patently a very, very tough issue of civil liberties and you have got to have a great deal of confidence in the police and in the criminal justice system.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Finally, also, would you agree that there is an element of schizophrenia about this in the public debate in that of course the police do retain finger print records permanently which are routinely taken on arrest and they are not expunged from the record after a period of time?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A very good point. This is a difficult area. The civil libertarians will clearly want to make sure that innocent people cannot be the victims of any kind of failure in the criminal justice system. On the other hand there are many cases - and you have cited just a couple of them just now - where it was patently vital for the solution of the crime that DNA was retained. I think really you need to look at the text of this Protection of Freedom Act to see whether it gets the balance right.

I must confess to you now that I have not read the Act in full and I cannot discover what exactly is the timescale that it envisages for the restitution of the DNA.

3770/2012 - Police Bail

Victoria Borwick

Over 6000 offenders were convicted of serious indictable offences while on bail in 2011 in London. What will you do to ensure police and courts refuse bail to criminals, identified as potentially dangerous, except in exceptional circumstances?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Victoria, yes. You are quite right to point out this problem; 6,000 offences committed whilst on bail in 2011. That is a large number. It is plainly a matter of concern. We had this conversation earlier. I have asked MOPAC to look at this and we will try to get to the bottom of it. If I had to guess I would say it was a function of the extreme pressure on prison places and the difficulties of creating enough space for prisoners out on bail.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am also out of time here but I really wanted to flag up this issue because it is very concerning to Londoners that particularly violent crime happens when people are out on bail. It does not give confidence to people who want to help the police if they then think that possibly being a witness or helping the police in some other ways means that when these people are let out

on bail they continue to commit crime. The end result of that is obviously lack of confidence in policing and obviously people out who should not be out.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are right to raise it. MOPAC is going to look at it. We will try to get back to you.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you very much and we all look forward to hearing more on that. Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair):3793/2012 - Welfare Reform

Nicky Gavron

Are the concessionary measures you negotiated to the government's welfare reform programme adequate?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Nicky. I believe that the transitional measures that we have negotiated are having a positive impact. I am aware of the problem. We all saw the problem in the *Guardian* a couple of weeks ago. What we are trying to do is assess the scale of that problem at the moment but, in the meantime, the transitional measures that we negotiated are certainly having an effect; the extra cash for London, the delay, and so on.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Yes. The thing about the transitional arrangements is that they are just that: they are transitional. They can help give people a few months so they can find somewhere but the situation now -- and you referred to the *Guardian* story. For those who do not know about this, both Conservative and Labour boroughs, 17 of them, have said that they are having to move residents out of London because they cannot find rented accommodation in their boroughs or indeed within London that actually are beneath the housing benefit caps. This is before we get on to the total benefit cap. You have always said people should not move out of London. Do you think you have severely misjudged this situation?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, what I said if you will remember -- I have never said that people should not move out of London. That is completely untrue. What I have said is I did not want to see a mass exodus. I used some colourful language I seem to recall about a Kosovo style exodus --

Nicky Gavron (AM): "I don't want to see such an exodus. It won't take place on my watch."

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- with convoys of saucepan laden dog carts and so on. That is not going to happen. What we are digging into is the scale of the problem. I think what most reasonable people will accept - I think this was even Labour Party policy going into the 2010 election - is that when average incomes are £26,000 or less it is reasonable to have a benefits cap of that order. That is a lot of money to pay by anybody's standards. Obviously there will be an impact, particularly in the parts of London where it is more expensive to rent but we are doing what we can, as I said, to mitigate those impacts. The most important of which is that we are building more affordable homes. We did a --

Nicky Gavron (AM): That is rather long term though, isn't it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We did a record number in the first term and, in spite of real difficulties in the market which nobody should minimise, we are on target to do another record number. We think we can do another 55,000. That is the way to tackle the problem in the long term.

I am not opposed to movements either outside London or within London. It is natural --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Can I just come in here please?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- for there to be such moves.

Nicky Gavron (AM): If you have lost your job in Croydon should you have to move to Hull? If you are on low pay in Brent should you have to move to Hastings? This is an example from the last Mayor's Question Time. If you are a mental health nurse on £21,000 with a child in Westminster should you have to move to bed and breakfast? This is what is happening.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The number of people in bed and breakfasts actually are about 5,000 fewer than they were ten years ago in this city and of course --

Nicky Gavron (AM): But they are rising aren't they now? Rising high. Can I just say, you yourself said to Iain Duncan Smith [Secretary of State for Work and Pensions] that 87% of the country's claimants who would be hardest hit are in London. The boroughs are saying that about 63,000 claimants are going to be very hard hit and will have to move out. Remember a lot of these claimants are in work. There are 50,000 households with three, four and five children - that is 180,000 children - who will inevitably be hit by this. You have always said you have got very constructive ongoing dialogue with Government. You say the reforms are necessary but why don't you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So has the Labour Party. Do you not say that?

Nicky Gavron (AM): Wait a minute. Why don't you recognise the impact on London and ask for a regional variation in the caps? Why don't you ask that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we have asked for is that child related benefits should be included in the cap and that there should be some flexibility there. We have not yet been successful in making --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Sorry, I missed what you said. Child ...?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Should be excluded - thank you - from the cap.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Child benefit should be excluded from the cap. In London or everywhere?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, because of the particular difficulties faced by families in London.

Nicky Gavron (AM): That is the total benefit cap. I applaud that. What have you asked about the benefit --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Not only do you applaud that but you actually support the policy of the benefits. Or you used to.

Nicky Gavron (AM): We have always asked for a regional variation in the benefit caps and the total benefit cap. Now here you are asking for a regional variation. What about the housing benefit caps? Are you asking for a regional variation in those?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, as I say --

Nicky Gavron (AM): No, that is the total benefit cap you are talking about.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): When considering the impact of the housing benefit cap on --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Caps. Plural.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- London households what we have argued for is a series of mitigations --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Yes, but they are all transitional. They are just delaying the pain.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nicky, at the moment I am not convinced that we are seeing the Kosovo style exodus that I warned against --(which is the language that I used). Yes, it is true that councils are seeing whether they can find accommodation elsewhere but we need to dig into the numbers and we need to work out what we can do to protect the most vulnerable families, and that is what we are determined to do.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): Assembly Member Gavron, I am so sorry to break up this really good exchange but you are out of time.

Nicky Gavron (AM): So am I.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair):3421/2012 - Possible closure of Lewisham A&E

Darren Johnson

Will you be adding your voice to those opposing the closure of Lewisham Hospital's Accident and Emergency Department?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Darren, I will be seeing the Trust special administrator responsible for the proposals for Lewisham Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department on 6 December 2012. I will seek his assurances on a number of points; what the conditions actually say, the impact on health inequalities of this proposal, the impact on travel times, blue light journeys and whether the public have been properly consulted. I will be only too happy to let you know the upshot of that meeting.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you. I would welcome an update. I remember when Queen Mary in Bexley was facing similar threats back in 2008 and there you did what you could; you lobbied, you

marched and you spoke out. Will you be prepared to do the same on behalf of the people in south east London if you are not satisfied with what the administrator says?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I am not satisfied on the points that I will interrogate him about then of course I will support you.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Your own London Plan projections show an extra 85,000 people coming to live in that catchment area for the A&E of those three boroughs. 85,000 extra people. That has got to be a consideration. Will you be taking that into account?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, because we will be looking at all the impacts on health inequalities and on travel times and so on. I must repeat the point I think I have made about 58 times this morning; it is my job not just to stick up for London services and to fight for improvements but also, where there is a coherent intellectual case made for reconfiguration or changes, to be open to the views of respected clinicians who have nothing but the interests of their patients at heart. You have got to strike a balance. I cannot give you my view now. I am seeing this guy on 6 December.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Your speaking out on this could really make a difference to these ludicrous proposals which are really worrying the people of south east London and particularly of Lewisham. You said in a previous Mayor's Question Time that if these things can be all party and not simply dominated by one voice then they have more chance of success. I urge you, on that basis, to join with other politicians of all parties in opposing this closure plan and speaking out against it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course I will in principle. The depressing truth is that a cause is not necessarily just simply because it is supported by all parties. There is a tragic reality of democratic politics that no one particular party will want to be outflanked on a very sensitive and emotive issue by another party. Where one group has managed to get up a head of steam over a particular closure or problem it would be the very, very strong temptation of other parties to row in behind. Sometimes it is my job to look at the issue as dispassionately as I possibly can - I have no view about this matter, Darren; I am not pre-judging this - and to decide where the interests of London lie.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Will you also ask TfL to have a thorough assessment of the transport implications as well?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I think that is a relevant consideration. That was something that I was able to offer to Onkar's [Sahota AM] delegation when they came to see me in the matter of Ealing Hospital. That is a relevant consideration and is something that we can be useful on.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Johnson. Silvertown Crossing. Can he have a quick answer?

3422/2012 - Silvertown Crossing

Darren Johnson

Given you abandoned the Thames Gateway Bridge on the grounds that it would add to traffic and pollution, why are you promoting the Silvertown tunnel?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You want a quick answer.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): I have only got 1 minute and 17 seconds left.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Right... Well my answer...

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Come on. Come on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My answer is that the Silvertown Crossing will provide added capacity without any of the adverse consequences of the Thames Gateway Bridge (TGB) and will greatly improve the resilience of the road network and it will greatly reduce the adverse environment impact and congestion in local areas.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Car ownership is actually declining with 700,000 less vehicles owned by Londoners despite a rapidly rising population. Will your study be taking account of this, will the consultation be taking account of that and will you be informing Londoners of that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The key thing here, Darren, in the brief seconds remaining, is that the Silvertown Crossing is unlike the Thames Gateway Bridge in that it plugs into a road network that has the capacity to deal with it. Sending the TGB up across into Knee Hill in Bexley would have added massively to congestion and pollution. I hear the chuntering from [Labour Assembly Members on] my right. What we are doing, by proceeding first with the Silvertown Crossing, is alleviating potential traffic pressure on any future crossing - mark these words - that we may consider in the Galleons Reach area.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): I am out of time.

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): You can pick it up next time. Thank you very much.

[Conservative Assembly Members indicate the Labour Assembly Members are heckling the Mayor.]

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): I do not know what you are pointing at. What I saw was a conversation between the Mayor and a Member. Please, it does not help. I am not ignoring him. I do not hear him from up here. When I have heard him I have issued him with a warning. I have said to the Mayor time and time again that he is best ignored. What is the point of order Assembly Member Duvall?

Len Duvall (AM): Chair, it was me this time - not my colleague, Mr Biggs! I could not let him take the blame. I could not sit here silently.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good for you, Len!

Jennette Arnold OBE (Chair): I refer you to the same standing order. Now, Mr Mayor, thank you very much for your answers here today.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you so much.

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